



Human Resources  
Administration  
Department of  
Social Services

## TESTIMONY

Kathleen Carlson, Acting Commissioner  
Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services

*2015 Preliminary Executive Budget Hearing*

*Hearing of the New York City Council General Welfare Committee*

March 24, 2014

Good morning Chairman Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. I am Kathleen Carlson, Acting Commissioner and Chief Administrative Officer of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). Joining me this afternoon are Ellen Levine, our Agency's Chief Financial Officer, and Jill Berry, Executive Deputy Commissioner of Finance. As you know, Mayor de Blasio recently appointed Steven Banks as HRA's new Commissioner and he will officially begin his tenure with the Agency a week from today on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Incoming Commissioner Banks very much looks forward to meeting with the General Welfare Committee at your convenience and at that time will be able to share and discuss with you more specific details regarding his, the Mayor's, the First Deputy Mayor's, and Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Lilliam Barrios-Paoli's vision, policy priorities, and direction for HRA moving forward.

Today, I am here to review HRA's 2014 approved budget and the FY 2015 Preliminary Budget Proposal and answer any questions you have related to them. In April, Commissioner Banks will be available to address broader questions about various programs within HRA as well as other policy questions. Since there are new members to the Committee, I would also like to give a brief overview of the programs administered by HRA and our agency's dedicated workforce of 14,000 public servants.

## **BROAD OVERVIEW OF HRA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### Public Assistance and Related Services

As a Local Social Service District of New York State, HRA administers programs that are state-supervised and often times further governed by federal agencies. This includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP (formerly called Food Stamps), which currently serves nearly 1.8 million recipients in the City every month, resulting in annual benefits of \$3.4 billion in 2013. Our Cash Assistance program, comprised of both single individuals and families with children, serves 337,400 recipients as of February 2014. The Medicaid program serves 3.2 million New Yorkers although HRA's role in the program is currently in flux as a result of the newly created State Health Care Exchange, also known as the "New York State of Health." Established as part of the State's implementation of federal health care reform, the exchange is assuming the responsibility of determining eligibility for Medicaid for most new applicants under the age of 65, as well as for residents eligible for newly available federal financial assistance to lower the cost of private coverage. This means that 80 percent of new community Medicaid cases are now determined eligible through the exchange instead of by HRA. However, HRA still maintains responsibility for Medicaid renewals this year for those we determined eligible prior to the exchange, those who will seek Medicaid related to disability, and to more than 110,000 individuals in long-term care. We will be offering application assistance in some of our Medicaid offices to consumers applying for coverage through the exchange. HRA will also continue to educate New York City residents and small businesses about health insurance options and new financial assistance benefits, both in-person and on-line.

In addition, our Child Support Enforcement program serves approximately 400,000 cases and in 2013 collected over \$742 million in child support income from non-custodial parents, with over 90 percent distributed directly to families and benefiting a quarter of a million New York City children. HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program assists low income New Yorkers in stretching their food dollars through a network of emergency feeding programs. Through an annual food budget of \$8.3 million, approximately 120 community kitchens serve an average of 273,000 individuals, and 370 food pantries serve 850,000 individuals each month. In addition, our Home Energy Assistance Program offers low income households assistance with their energy costs and last heating season issued 800,000 benefits worth \$33 million.

#### HRA's Vulnerable Populations Services

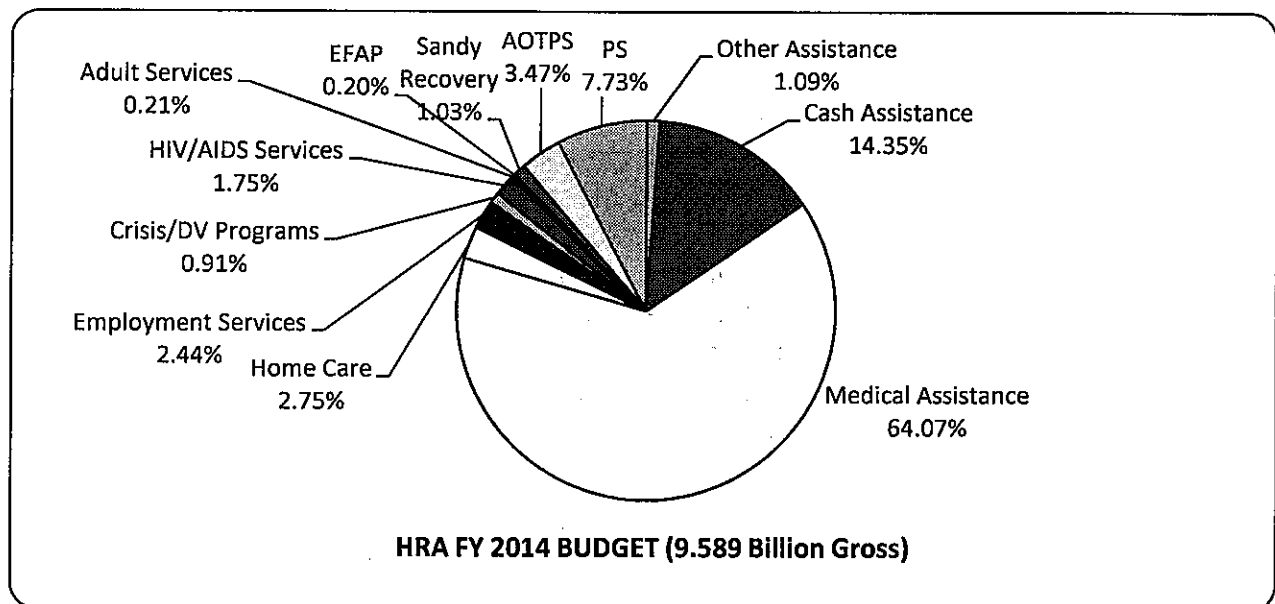
In addition to the already mentioned benefits and services, HRA also has staff dedicated to supporting some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Our Adult Protective Services (APS) program, mandated by New York State, provides protective services to adults 18 and older who are physically and/or mentally impaired and at-risk in the community with no one willing and able to responsibly assist them. Today, APS provides assessment services to approximately 3,500 clients and ongoing services to over 5,500 clients a month. HRA also provides domestic violence emergency shelter to more than 1,000 families every day and community-based support to over 3,000 families dealing with domestic violence each month. In addition, our Home Care program, which has largely been transferred to state-administered managed long term care programs still includes approximately 4,500 home care cases for people exempt or excluded from managed long-term care. These are primarily Medicaid waiver, child, and hospice cases. In addition to all of the programs that I mentioned that are state-supervised, there are several others that are unique to New York City. Our HIV/AIDS Services Administration, also known as HASA, currently serves over 32,000 medically eligible clients and their families totaling over 43,000 individuals. HASA provides intensive case management, timely delivery of benefits and services, and emergency housing for New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, our Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), which aims to reduce violence within relationships among middle and high school students, supports approximately 50,000 students at 57 schools and directly serves 11,000 each year.

#### **HRA's Overall Budget**

With regards to the budget, HRA manages over \$35 billion in city, state and federal resources, although much of the funding, including SNAP benefits and the federal and state shares of Medicaid, do not pass through the City's budget. HRA's actual Fiscal Year 2015 (FY 15) Expense Budget is \$9.6 billion, of which \$7.4 billion comes from City Tax Levy (CTL) and \$2.2 billion is federal and state revenue. A majority of the tax levy budget consists of the \$6.3 billion city share of Medicaid costs. In addition, our Capital Budget for the four years beginning in FY 14 is \$251 million, of which \$170 million is City Tax Levy. Major capital projects include \$80.5 million for interior construction of the new HRA administrative headquarters, which will be an important tenant for 4 World Trade Center, and \$47.8 million to support our Re-Engineering

Initiative which aims to improve customer service by offering clients more efficient ways to interact with HRA through new and improved technology.

In FY 13 HRA's expenses were supported by \$2.3 billion in federal and state revenue from a variety of different revenue streams, most notably \$736 million in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); \$597 million in Medical Assistance administration; \$108.5 million in SNAP administration; \$286 million in Safety Net; and \$245 million in additional TANF funding for administration and employment services as part of the New York State Flexible Fund for Family Services. It is important to note that funding from many of these sources is limited by caps and any spending costs above the limit are usually 100 percent from City Tax levy. At the state level, administrative reimbursement for Cash Assistance, SNAP and Child Support Enforcement was eliminated altogether over the last several state budgets. This reduction was further exacerbated by a change in a long-standing agreement between the State and localities to share equally in the cost of the actual benefits. In the Safety Net Assistance program, which has no federal funding share, the State reduced its share from 50 percent of program benefit costs to 29 percent, leaving localities to pick up 71 percent of the cost. At the same time, the State changed its budgeting to cover the full cost of Family Assistance benefits with federal TANF block grant dollars, which eliminated both state and local dollars. This transaction provided savings to the State but leaves the City vulnerable if costs rise in the Safety Net program or if the TANF block grant becomes over-extended.



#### November Plan Budget Changes

I would also like to highlight several changes to our budget in the November Plan, including restoration of funding for several important programs. Within our HASA program, supportive housing contracts were restored by \$7 million gross (\$5 m. CTL) and HASA Financial



Management services was restored to \$200,000. We were also very pleased, as I am sure the Council is as well, to see \$2 million restored to the Teen RAPP Program as well as \$12 million to fully fund the Parks Job Training Partnership program. The November Plan also included \$1.5 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), funds that were also typically added to HRA's budget every year during the Adopted Budget. By including them for FY 15 and the out-years they are now base-lined into HRA's overall EFAP budget. The November Plan also included additional funding to create a Family Justice center in Staten Island that will be the fifth center to be established in partnership with the District Attorney's Offices. Once established, there will be a center in every borough.

## **THE JANUARY PLAN**

### **Re-Engineering For Better Customer Service**

HRA's total budgeted full-time headcount is 14,096 as of the 2014 January Plan and our FY 15 budget includes a planned headcount reduction of 587 attributable to our Re-Engineering initiative to use technology in order to better serve our clients. We anticipate achieving this headcount reduction through attrition and re-deployment, while making sure to maintain enough staff to continue to serve clients in the ways that best meet their needs. It is important to point out that embracing the use of technology to better serve clients in the human services domain and for the delivery of public benefits is occurring across the country. Research indicates that across different income levels many people want to utilize technology to handle transactions. According to an HRA internal survey completed in 2011, 61 percent of recipients used the Internet daily. A follow-up survey last year found that 93 percent of clients have cell phones, with 75 percent of the phones being smart phones. This is very much in line with the national trend outlined by the Pew Research Center survey on Internet usage which found that of people living below the federal poverty level, 83 percent had a cell phone and 70 percent had access to the Internet.

Starting with the SNAP Program, we are including more ways for recipients to interact with HRA either on-line or through the telephone. The end goal is a self-directed service model where City residents will be able to view their HRA account online 24 hours a day/seven days per week. They will be able to submit applications, recertification or required documents on-line, view upcoming benefits, review program notices, or easily submit changes to case information. Eventually, applicants and recipients will not be required to physically come into our offices for services as often. This will make the program easier to access because clients will not have to miss a day of work or make child care arrangements just to submit an application, report a change, or deliver a document. However, individuals who still want to come into the office and speak to someone in person will continue to be able to do so. This is a very large initiative that the prior Administration initiated, and Incoming Commissioner Banks will be reviewing it very closely as soon as he is formally in the role.

The January Plan also included several additional changes to HRA's overall budget. These changes are also things that Incoming Commissioner Banks will be reviewing and therefore they will not be finalized until after his start date.

Delay in Sale of Multi Service Centers (MSC): In order to give the new Administration time to reassess the impact of selling HRA/city-owned buildings used as Multi Service Centers and to gather further community input, especially from Council Speaker Mark-Viverito and other elected officials, the FY 14 budget includes a year delay in savings associated with that original plan. To that end, \$25 million was restored in FY 14 and these savings were shifted to the FY 15 budget. Incoming Commissioner Banks will be reviewing this initiative before it proceeds.

Municipal ID's: The January Plan includes \$430,000 for the planning process to launch the City's municipal identification card. HRA has been in meetings with the Mayor's Office of Operations and Immigrant Affairs and many other agencies to determine how to operationalize and launch this important citywide initiative.

Public/Media Outreach for Income and Food Assistance Programs: HRA will receive \$1 million each fiscal year beginning in FY14 to develop a citywide campaign to connect to New Yorkers who aren't aware they may be eligible for benefits such as SNAP, Cash Assistance, and emergency assistance (known as one shots). Currently, we outreach to hundreds of community organizations and moving forward we will utilize earned, owned and paid media, and other innovative strategies for touching as many New Yorkers as possible with the message that our programs are here to help them. Incoming Commissioner Banks will be leading this overall effort once he starts.

Training Coordinator: We are also very excited about the \$1.3 million in targeted funding (over 5 years) identified in the plan to hire staff to train on policies governing immigrant access to public benefits. We are in the first stages of this process of discussing the training needs internally with HRA program areas and will be working in close coordination with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to ensure the training is strategically designed.

HASA 30 Percent Rent Cap: Funds were added to the January Plan to help move forward on the Administration's priority to cap the contribution towards rent for clients in our HASA program to 30 percent of their income. This type of rent subsidy would be provided through Cash Assistance and, as such, \$6.7 million was added to our budget for FY 14 and \$26.7 million for FY 15. This policy change is a joint initiative between the City and State, and, as such, we look forward to the State sharing in the cost of the implementation both financially and through necessary changes to the State's management information system.

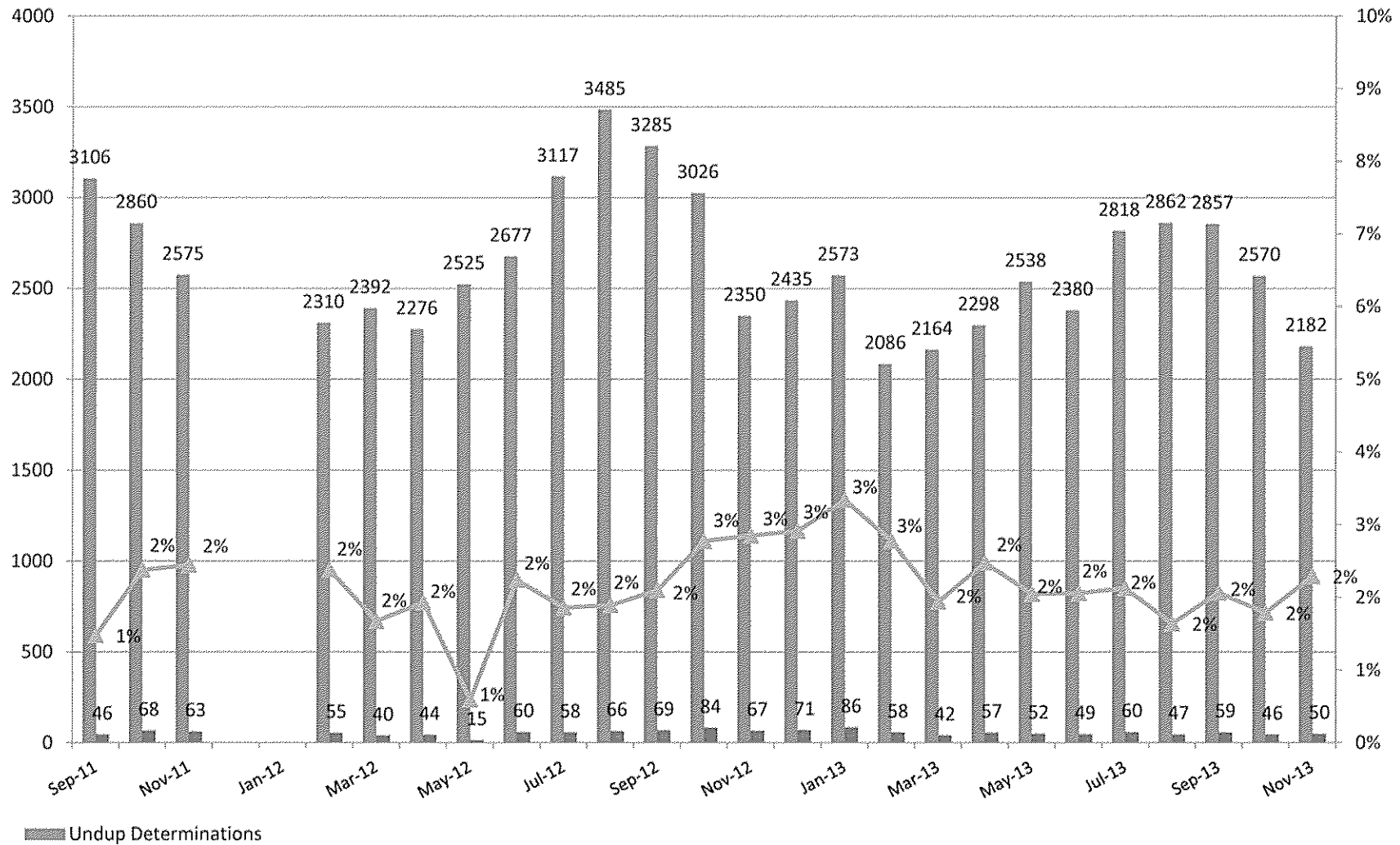
Cash Assistance Re-Estimate: The total cash assistance budget is \$1.37 billion in 2014, of which \$557 million is City tax levy funds, and in 2015 the budget increases to \$1.39 billion, of which \$570 million is City funds. The increase is due to the annualization of the funds added to the Cash Assistance budget for the HASA rent cap. The 2014 and 2015 Cash Assistance budget was also re-forecast as part of the January Plan, based on the actual caseload at the time, and

resulted in about \$17 million in total savings and \$30 million in City savings each year. The incoming Commissioner will also be reviewing the Cash Assistance budget and the underlying reasons for this change.

In looking at HRA's overall budget, there was a decline of \$37.3 million between FY 14 and FY 15 with an increase of \$67.8 million in City funds. The overall budget decreases in FY 15 are due to reduced administrative and personnel funding related to Benefits Re-Engineering and Sandy housing recovery. The increase to City Tax Levy can be attributed to the increased city weekly share of Medicaid in FY 15.

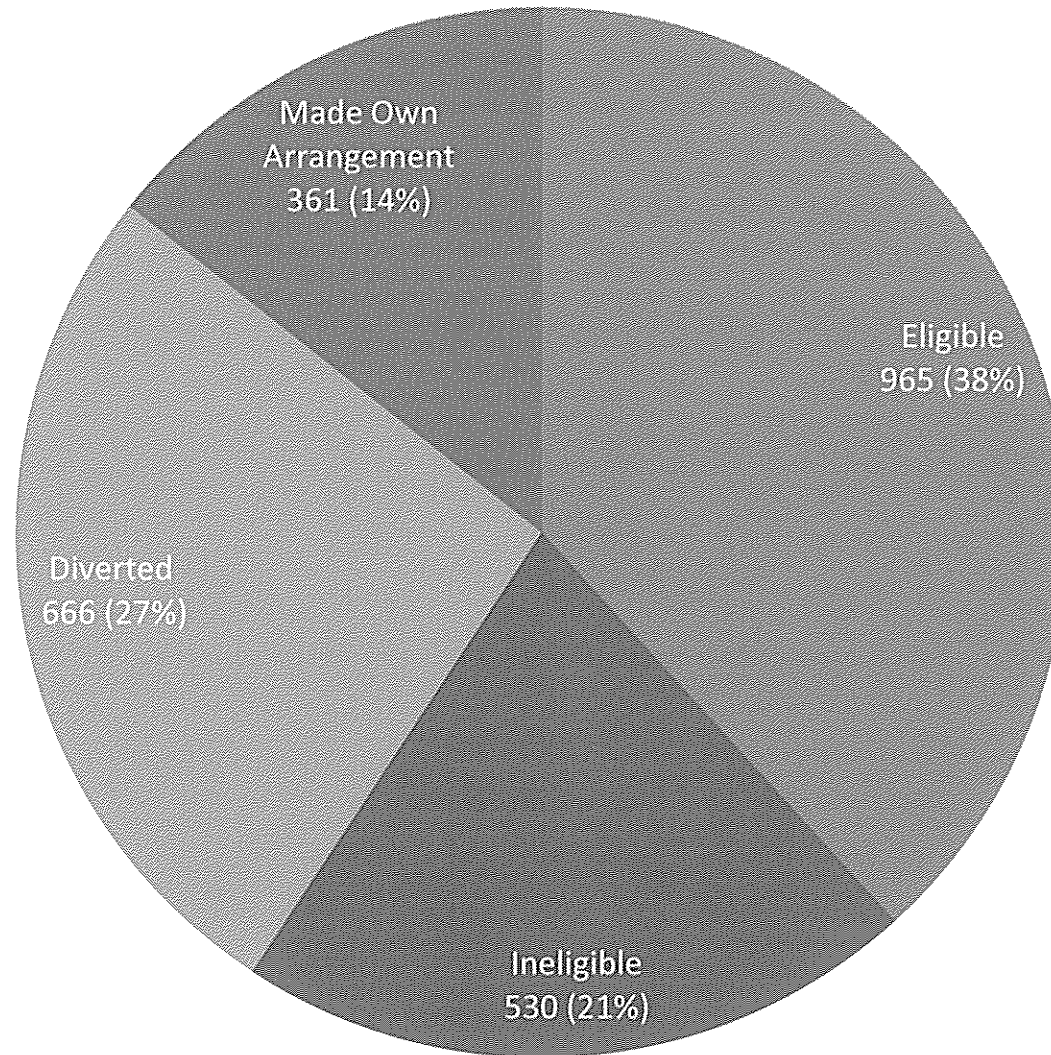
I believe this covers the intricacies and details of HRA's budget and my colleagues here with me today and I welcome your questions related to it.

## "Change-in-Determinations" (CDs) at PATH

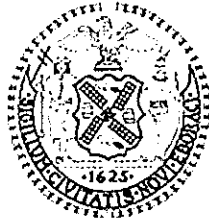


\*NOTE: Data not available for Dec. 2011 and Jan. 2012 due to CARES transition.

## FYTD14: Monthly Outcome Averages (July - January)



**NYC**<sup>TM</sup>  
**Administration for  
Children's Services**



**The New York City Council**

**Committees on Finance, General Welfare, Juvenile Justice and Women's Issues**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Monday, March 24, 2014**

**Testimony by**

**Gladys Carrión, Commissioner**

**New York City Administration for Children's Services**

Good morning Chairs Ferreras, Levin, Cumbo, and Cabrera, and members of the Finance, General Welfare, Women's Issues, and Juvenile Justice Committees. I am Gladys Carrión, Commissioner of New York City's Administration for Children's Services. With me today is Susan Nuccio, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services. I appreciate having this opportunity to brief you on the preliminary budget and to update you on Children's Services' ongoing work and how it will support the agency's mission to protect and support New York's vulnerable children and families.

### **Overview**

I would like to start by sharing with you some details regarding our budget. Children's Services budget for Fiscal Year 2015 provides for operating expenses of \$2.9 billion, of which approximately \$874 million is city tax levy. Unlike in previous years, we are thankful that we have not had to make any cuts to our agency budget in this cycle.

During my eight-year tenure as the Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services, New York State moved toward implementation of an agenda focused on child well-being. A growing body of research indicates that ensuring safety and achieving permanency are necessary to well-being, but they are not sufficient and we should not stop there. Safety is paramount and permanency is an important outcome, but as we move toward a record-low foster care census and a steadily decreasing residential juvenile justice population, it is critical that we understand and influence what happens to the young people who come through our system. Do they learn and succeed in school, do they graduate from high school, do they possess the skills to go on to higher education or obtain a job that pays a livable wage, and do they have the social and emotional skills to develop healthy relationships? We can do better. So, as we continue to ensure safety, we will also focus on the well-being of the children and families who are involved in our systems. The foundation of this framework is a knowledgeable workforce, a greater focus on understanding the impact of trauma on our children and families and more effective engagement with our community partners and provider agencies. In each of our program areas -- child welfare, juvenile justice and early care and education, we are already taking steps toward this direction. I look forward to expanding our approach from a safety and risk focus, to one that includes a child well-being frame that works to strengthen the family's ability to nurture and as well as protect their children.

## **Child Welfare and Reform Efforts**

Each year, ACS investigates approximately 55,000 allegations of abuse or neglect. In 40% of these cases, we find some credible evidence of abuse or neglect. Wherever possible, ACS provides preventive services to keep families safely together. Last year, ACS provided preventive services to over 22,000 families. To protect and improve the lives of New York City's most vulnerable children, young people and families, we must constantly evaluate and use the science and research of what works and the tools available to continuously improve our work.

Unfortunately, my appointment to ACS coincided with the tragic deaths of several young children. After reviewing those cases in depth, Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayor Barrios-Paoli, and I announced recommendations related to child welfare case practice and citywide partnerships to ensure the safety of New York City's most vulnerable children. Among other reforms, we are:

- Reviewing and bolstering ACS' Approach to the Highest Risk Child Welfare Cases. To this end, we are assessing our Family Services Units (FSU), which serve and support high-risk families in cases where the Family Court has ordered that ACS supervise the home;
- Improving collaboration with other city and state agencies. This agency is focused on the safety, permanency and well-being of children; however, the welfare of children and young people is the responsibility of the entire City. Toward that end, I recommended to the Mayor that he establish a Children's Cabinet. Under the leadership of Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, the New York City's Children's Cabinet is being established, and will bring together over 14 city agencies in order to establish and improve interagency communication and services related to children and families.
- Introducing and supporting State Legislation that will assist child protective practices by giving ACS the ability to access arrest records, in addition to the criminal records we now are authorized to view;
- Creating a public awareness campaign to emphasize that the safety of children is a collective responsibility and to raise awareness about the many ways that New Yorkers can impact and improve child safety and well-being.



To oversee and insure the implementation of these reforms, ACS will hire an internal monitor who will report directly to me and assume responsibility for establishing a robust child fatality and review process and will identify ways to improve the services ACS provides and to overcome systemic barriers to child safety and well-being.

As we implement these reforms in child protective practices, we are continuing to strengthen relationships and improve collaboration with our preventive and foster care providers. Preventive services provided by ACS and our network of social service agencies include counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence intervention, home care, support for pregnant and parenting teens, support for families with children with special medical or developmental disabilities, sexually exploited youth, and other services. In 2013, ACS expanded our preventive continuum of services to include evidence based, evidenced informed and promising practice models of service delivery. We currently have total capacity for 12,791 preventive services slots, which includes 497 slots that were awarded in August 2013 to serve high-risk teens.

New York City's foster care census continues to decline; in 2013, approximately 11,690 children were in foster care, down ten percent from the 12,950 in care in 2012. For those who are in care, we are working to ensure they build the skills that foster stable adulthood. Last year, ACS created The Housing Academy Collaborative (HAC) to better prepare young people to maintain long-term possession of NYCHA and supportive housing when they leave foster care. The Housing Academy also offers workshops on resume and career building, employment, and financial literacy. Since inception, over 240 young people have participated in the Housing Academy.

### **Early Care and Education**

New York City oversees the largest publicly-funded early care and education system in the country, where we invest over \$1 billion annually to meet the needs of about 100,000 children. Mayor de Blasio's plan to expand free Universal Pre-Kindergarten presents ACS with an opportunity to review both our contracted and non-contracted systems of care in order to assess how we can improve our system. This will be our focus over the next year.

We know high quality early care and education programs do much more than provide child care; they promote healthy early childhood development and offer extensive support to

parents and caregivers and get children ready to learn. The Mayor's plan to expand high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten builds on this same vision and ACS is working closely with the Department of Education to ensure that all four year-olds will receive the same quality standards, regardless of whether contracted under ACS or by DOE. In the first year of the Mayor's Pre-K plan, ACS will implement quality enhancements for the 12,681 seats that contract with ACS to serve four-year-olds. These enhancements will make it possible to provide full day UPK services without any cost to the parent.

This opportunity to assess our early care and education allows us to look at both our contracted and non-contracted systems. Our new contracted system, *EarlyLearn NYC*, began in October 2012. Since that time, ACS staff and providers have worked very hard to implement a systemic transformation. Currently, 136 ACS contracted providers serve over 31,000 children in 363 centers and in 1,628 Family Child Care providers' homes across the five boroughs. Our center-based enrollment is at 88% today and ACS continues to work with our providers to ensure that they have the support they need and that families are aware of the nearest *EarlyLearn NYC* center in their neighborhood. But even before I arrived at ACS, I have heard concerns about *EarlyLearn NYC* – that it falls short of reaching its aspirational vision. We know there is always room to do better, and I am confident that working together with providers, agencies, and other stakeholders, we can continue to make improvements to the system.

In addition to the 31,000 plus children served in the contracted system, ACS funds child care for about 66,000 additional children through a voucher system. As ACS has explained in the past, as families are choosing formal care settings and younger children are being served in non-*EarlyLearn* settings, the total cost of care has resulted in a significant deficit against our budget. The City is continuing to explore ways to encourage voucher recipients to enroll in vacant *EarlyLearn* seats in order to both address this deficit and to ensure the long term viability of a high quality contracted-care system.

Children's Services has also been working to assist families impacted by the March 12 tragedy in East Harlem. It was brought to our attention that some families are in need of child care, and our Early Care and Education staff have been working hard to identify services in the community for these families.

## **Juvenile Justice**

Working to transform the juvenile justice system was a priority of mine when I served as the state Commissioner and will continue to be now that I am serving the City. We are committed to providing preventive services for youth in crisis. Out-of-home juvenile justice placement is, and should be, our last option. ACS oversees two community-based alternative programs that offer young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in, the juvenile justice system the opportunity to receive services at home. FAP, the Family Assessment Program that identifies services and provides referrals to help families work through their challenges before the need for court involvement arises, was able to serve 6,700 families in 2013. The other program, JJI, the Juvenile Justice Initiative, links young people and families with intensive therapeutic interventions aimed at diverting youth from residential placement. JJI seeks to reduce recidivism, improve youth and family functioning and reduce the number of delinquent youth in residential facilities and has the capacity to serve 280 young people each year.

We are also happy to report that the NYS Division of Criminal Justice services awarded a contract to ACS, NY Foundling and the Center for Court Innovation, which will expand our capacity and enable us to provide alternative to detention (ATD) services to youth in Queens. In total, through partnerships with the NYC Probation and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, we have leveraged city tax levy dollars, federal, state and private foundation funds to invest close to \$37 million dollars in diversion programs. Adding our investments in DYCD Beacon and Summer Youth Employment programs, ACS' child welfare preventive dollars that fund services for our most vulnerable youth and families, and the ATDs administered by the NYC Office of the Criminal Justice Director, support by the City for programs designed to keep youth out of our Juvenile Justice system is substantial.

It comes as no surprise that many young people who have engaged in delinquent behavior have a history that involves abuse or neglect. ACS is dedicated to understanding and addressing the needs of this population, known as "crossover youth" who are involved in both our child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University developed a "Crossover Youth Practice Model," which recognizes that we must build on individual and family strengths in order to help young people overcome challenges. ACS in collaboration with the Family Court is incorporating this model to improve on-going work between juvenile justice and child welfare partners and family members. Our CONFIRM unit

works with young people involved in both systems to reduce the number of out-of-home placements where safe and appropriate and to consistently engage families.

I am also committed to build upon my statewide efforts to work with judges and others to further reduce the unnecessary use of juvenile detention. While we have seen a marked decrease in the use of detention, too many young people are in detention for just a few days, and it is clear that these young people are not a risk to the community. While a young person is in detention waiting for his or her case to be adjudicated, ACS has an opportunity to ascertain what that young person's needs are and begin to address them. We will work with detention facility staff to ensure we are capturing this opportunity to evaluate and meet the educational, medical, mental health, vocational and family needs of young people in detention.

Eighteen months ago, the City and State launched Close to Home, which gave ACS custody of New York City's young people adjudicated as juvenile delinquents. The City launched the first phase of Close to Home, Non-Secure Placement, in September 2012. Since then, nearly 300 young people have successfully completed their court orders, which ACS divides into two components: residential care and aftercare. Approximately 200 youth are currently in residential care, and 85 are on after care status. Central to Close to Home is the ability for youth to remain connected with their families and communities. We will work to build a strong network of community providers in the neighborhoods where our children return after they leave our system. Our young people need to be connected to supports in their communities that will offer them options that lead to success.

ACS is preparing to launch Limited Secure Placement this fall. We had planned to launch earlier in the year but I want to be certain that New York City has ironed out any remaining NSP challenges before we accept responsibility for higher needs youth. The LSP sites are larger than the NSP sites, and are presenting some challenges with respect to construction and renovation. ACS is working with three local non-profit agencies to provide LSP services at nine residential sites in and just outside of New York City. These residences will have more restrictive features to ensure the safety of residents, program staff, and communities and will provide many services, including education, onsite. We anticipate that each site will serve twelve to twenty youth, for a total projected census of approximately 140 young people in the LSP system.

**For too long our communities have been seen as the problem, for too long children have been sent far away and their families ignored or even vilified, these families and communities are assets that we need to support and embrace to achieve better outcomes for our children.**

## **Conclusion**

I am honored to have the opportunity to continue to serve New York City's Children and Families in my new role as Commissioner of ACS. It is my sincere hope that as I endeavor to strengthen the work of ACS, I can also reframe our work to impact on measures of well-being that speak to the success of our young people and the public's understanding of our role. That as a city, we are all committed to keeping our children safe, our families strong and our young people on pathways to success. This is a shared responsibility.

I'm very much looking forward to a fruitful and productive collaboration with the City Council. Thank you for your time this morning. I welcome your comments and questions.



Department of  
Homeless Services

*City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing*  
*Fiscal Year 2015*  
*General Welfare Committee*  
Monday, March 24, 2014

Good afternoon Chair Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. I am Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Joining me this afternoon are Lula Urquhart, Deputy Commissioner for Fiscal, Procurement Operations and Audits, and Erin Villari, Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Revenue.

Today I'll outline Mayor de Blasio's Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget for DHS. This year the agency is fortunate to have several important financial restorations which reflect programmatic improvements that I hope will effectively demonstrate this Administration's priorities for the Department.

The Mayor's preliminary budget also reflects over \$41 million in new needs for FY15 as a result of growth in both the family and adult shelter census. On Thursday of last week, DHS' total shelter census reached 52,267 which include over 22,000 children living in shelters throughout the five boroughs. The figures are overwhelming however with a new administration and with a 1 billion dollar budget we have an opportunity to develop effective policy solutions to help stem the tide of new shelter entries.

Working through the Mayor's Office and with our partner agencies, DHS is establishing a strategic plan to reduce shelter census with the goal of both preventing new shelter entries and by providing successful, permanent placements to those who are already in shelter. In furtherance of these goals, we have recently begun advocating with the Executive and the Legislative bodies in Albany to remove budgetary language that restricts the City's ability to utilize State funds to provide rental assistance to homeless shelter clients. I know that the Council supports this measure and I welcome your efforts to advocate for this change with us. I have expressed our request to remove the prohibitive language to the Governor's staff so that we have the ability to move forward with a viable state and city funded rental assistance plan. My office met with the State legislative officials last week at the State Capitol to advance this plan and staff will return to Albany tomorrow to join the Mayor's State Legislative Affairs Office in recommending immediate action.

Should the Legislature remove the shelter restriction and allow the City to use Public Assistance funds for a new homeless rental subsidy program, the City will propose piloting a program targeted towards working families who have been unable to exit shelter. There are over a thousand families living in shelter who work full time. A rental assistance proposal is part of a larger housing strategy that includes Mayor de Blasio's commitment to building 200,000 units of affordable housing and it will also include working with New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to place homeless families into NYCHA housing.

### **Expanding Prevention Services**

This Administration, like the Council, also believes that preventing homelessness is a pivotal part of any strategy to address homelessness. We know that prevention works and we are committed to making it bigger, better and stronger. For starters, we are developing a strategy to increase the Homebase presence in high need communities in all five boroughs. Part of that plan will include more anti-eviction legal services and work with our colleagues in other city agencies to better coordinate these services. We also plan to launch a new public awareness campaign to continue to spread the word about prevention services. And, we will continue to add new sophisticated tools to outreach to families who are on the brink of homelessness before they come to shelter.

The Agency also recognizes how important it is to provide a range of aftercare services to families transitioning from shelter to the community. These services need to be tailored to individual family needs. For example, some families may need support furnishing their new home, enrolling their children in school, linking with community resources when they first move out of shelter. On an ongoing basis, they may need help finding a new job or negotiating a dispute with their landlord. Other families may need more intensive services that begin while they are still in shelter and continue for a period of time when they exit. DHS is prepared to work with our city partners to make sure that the appropriate aftercare services are available to all families exiting shelter on a rental assistance program.

DHS believes in bringing prevention services to families when and where they need it the most. We are pleased to partner with Fern Fisher, the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts, on a new pilot program in Brooklyn Housing Court to help unrepresented tenants by providing one-on-one assistance by experienced court navigators. We will continue to work with all of our partners to test new and innovative approaches to this very important work.

### **Shelter Exit Transitional Jobs Program**

The Shelter Exit Transitional (SET) jobs program, which was created and run in conjunction with HRA, subsidizes private sector jobs for shelter clients with the goal of helping them achieve and maintain independence.

The program combines job readiness services, job placement, and aftercare services and has achieved promising results thus far. We are in the process of analyzing data collected during our pilot period, conducted from May 2013 to December 2013, and the early results are promising. The program had a job placement rate over 50 percent and more than 90 percent of program recipients who were placed into jobs have exited shelter and not returned. In addition, 98 percent of SET clients placed into jobs who completed their subsidy period became permanent employees with the same employer. We are excited to continue this program and to offer job ready single adults this opportunity.

### **Improving Shelter Conditions**

We have also begun to assess the shelter environment where clients reside. When I met with this Committee last month, I shared that I would focus on the agency's efforts to improve the quality of DHS shelters because every homeless shelter client deserves an environment that is safe,

secure and supportive. In November, DHS received \$5 million in additional funding to enhance security at several contracted and directly operated facilities. We have also received \$36 million in new needs for capital projects for building upgrades and information technology. These investments will improve the health and safety of our clients with projects focusing on exterior renovations, heating, electrical and plumbing upgrades as well as enhancing security through the installation of security cameras.

I also mentioned last month that we should be holding ourselves to consistently high standards by providing intensive case management and an abundance of support to our clients. To that end, at each meeting with our providers, I have asked them how they would accomplish this goal and what specifically they would need to be successful in doing this from a programmatic standpoint. While not every suggestion will work for every provider or population they serve, I am considering ways to enhance our service model and will continue to build on our mutual successes.

### **Street Outreach Enhancements**

DHS is committed to serving all unsheltered individuals across the city. In 2007, we restructured services for street homeless individuals with one single provider in each borough. The new contracts were focused on chronic homeless individuals, emphasized placements not just contacts, and included performance based contracting. Since then, DHS has also developed a network of transitional housing specifically with this population in mind. Over 4300 clients have been placed since the contracts began.

Additionally, the overall number of people sleeping on the streets since 2005, has decreased by 62 percent. While we have seen great success in reducing the number of clients sleeping on the streets there has concurrently been a 118 percent increase in the number of people sleeping in the subways since 2005. This culminated in 2013 when the number of people sleeping in the subways of overall percentage of unsheltered homeless rose to 58 percent up from 19 percent in 2005.

DHS had been in conversations with the MTA about enhancing the subway outreach program for several years. In 2013 after the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) report was released, the MTA agreed to move forward and coordinate with DHS around a more robust service program. The MTA was currently funding \$800,000 for outreach to 468 subway stations compared to \$11 million funded by DHS for street teams. Due to a lack of funding, the services offered below ground were not as comprehensive as those accessible to clients working with one of the street teams. By managing the MTA contract, DHS could implement best practices already seen through the work with the street population and decrease any duplication of services between street and subway teams. The MTA has agreed to fund \$3 million of a \$6 million contract for outreach services in the subway and allow DHS to manage the contract under their existing umbrella of street services.

As we look forward to enhancing our efforts to reach those seeking refuge outside of shelter, DHS has advanced our collaboration with NYPD. The well being of the homeless and their impact on quality of life issues both on the streets and in the subway system are major concerns for the Agency. Currently, DHS works closely with the Homeless Outreach Unit (HOU) of the



NYPD and at the precinct level with Community Affairs Officers to engage street homeless clients. In an effort to build on these existing relationships and expand our collaborations, we've set up monthly meetings with the NYPD to support our respective efforts to address homelessness on the streets and in the subway. DHS outreach teams will be a resource to officers both in precincts and in transit districts who are encountering homeless individuals with a variety of issues that may require clinical intervention and specialized placement options.

### **FISCAL YEAR 2015 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

DHS' current FY14 expense budget is \$1.04 Billion; for next year, FY 15, the budget is \$981 million. We expect the \$62 million difference to be made up with grant funding that is added to our budget after the close of the Fiscal Year. Variances in the FY14 Preliminary Budget and the projected FY15 Preliminary Budget can be attributed to the following:

- \$22 million in Emergency Assistance Funds (EAF) a portion of which will be added to the Executive Budget and the balance will be added in FY15.
- \$14.9 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) grants which will be added to the FY15 at the beginning of the fiscal year.
- \$13.7 million in funding for expenses associated with Hurricane Sandy and the National Emergency Grant (NEG) that provided temporary employment to assist with the clean up after Hurricane Sandy. Funding will be added as needed in FY15.
- \$5.4 million for PEGs that were restored for FY14 only and have been deducted from the FY15 Budget.
- \$3.8 million in funding for Catherine and Auburn Street that was approved for FY14 only but will be increased and annualized in the FY15 Budget.
- \$2 million in City Council funding that is added yearly as a one-time initiative.

Of the \$981 million, \$481 million are City funds, \$116 million are State funds, \$379 million are federal funds, \$4 million are Community Development grant funding, and \$851,000 are intra-City funding. The \$981 million budget allocates \$393 million to services for single adults, \$526 million to services for families, and \$62 million to support services.

The DHS Capital Plan for the five-year period Fiscal Year 2014 through Fiscal Year 2018 is currently \$112 million. Capital projects for homeless families total \$33 million; projects for single adults total \$51 million; \$18 million has been allocated for support services; and \$10 million is designated for City Council-funded projects.

The Mayor's budget charts a new course, one that invests in the necessary supports to help homeless households achieve independence. Focusing on progressive policy, I hope that we can count on your support as we move forward with the Mayor's agenda to bridge the inequality gap and assist our homeless New Yorkers in reaching their full potential.

My staff and I will now answer any questions you may have.

**TESTIMONY**

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget,  
Mayor's FY '14 Preliminary Management Report and  
Agency Oversight Hearings**

**Committee on General Welfare**

**Stephen Levin, Chair**

**Presented on  
*Monday March 24, 2014***



**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**

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## **Preliminary Budget Hearing – General Welfare, March 24, 2014**

We want to thank the City Council and the Committee on Education for the opportunity to present this written testimony on behalf of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) and our nearly 16,000 members. This is a critically important time for education in our city. Although we have made some progress over the last several years and have entered a more collaborative era, we continue to face many challenges.

We are gratified that so many policy makers are now recognizing that access to early education is vital to our community. CSA supports the city's plan to establish high quality universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) and high quality after-school programs for middle school youth. We have an opportunity to build on this recognition and move forward with concrete ways that the City Council can help improve education to benefit youngsters from pre-K through high school.

### **Early Education**

Research has demonstrated that children who have enjoyed the benefits of universal pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are not only better prepared for first grade, but perform better throughout their school experience. We are all in agreement that UPK is a worthwhile investment for NYC and recognize that we cannot afford the significant fiscal burden that we will incur if we do not offer all students a chance to succeed in school and earn a good living afterwards.

CSA supports the Mayor's UPK initiative and we applaud his passionate advocacy and tenacity. We encourage him to pursue a UPK initiative that is the product of thoughtful consideration and planning. We only have one opportunity to get this right. Before we can bring UPK to a sustainable scale, we must focus on what CSA calls the three Qs: quality oversight, quality teaching and quality content. Urgency must not be allowed to overshadow the need for quality.

Today, oversight of the city's early childhood program is not centralized or accountable. Some contracts come under The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and others are supervised by the DOE. Private businesses also get involved. If UPK is to be of the highest quality, it must be in the hands of only one agency, one with education expertise and the ability to set high standards. The Department of Education has an existing structure for early childhood education and can assure alignment with the public schools and consistent supervision of teaching and learning in every early childhood classroom.

### **Budget Dance**

Last summer, former Mayor Bloomberg's budget aimed at cutting \$210 million of city funding from children's programs, including the elimination of more than 47,000 child care and after-

school slots. The City Council wasn't having that. We want to thank you for maintaining the city's commitment to our youngest children by negotiating a budget that restored funding essential to maintaining critical services to children and families. This included more than \$60 million for the Out-of-School Time After-School Program and more than \$62 million for child care. Unfortunately, almost all of these restorations are for one year only and will vanish on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. City Council funding restorations spared many child care centers and family childcare networks, but that funding is also due to expire June 30, 2014. A more constant source of funding is needed.

We hope that the City Council will continue to look kindly on the city funded centers. The November plan base-lined \$63 million in city funds, most of it to fund the City Council's contracted slots which had previously been funded one year at a time. We are aware that the City Council is engaged in discussions about whether to incorporate these slots into the EarlyLearn model and we'd like to let you know that we continue to have reservations about this financially blended structure of early childhood education.

### **EarlyLearn NYC**

EarlyLearn was intended to be an efficient way of merging child care and early education into a single, seamless system. Yet, since its implementation in 2012 EarlyLearn has left eligible families scrambling for seats. EarlyLearn has been a source of confusion, frustration and anxiety for both families and child care providers. The March IBO report stated that most of the decrease in contracted enrollment was a result of a decrease in capacity. At the time the 2013 budget was adopted, contracted capacity was expected to total 50,830, including 45,911 ACS slots and 4,919 City Council slots. Actual combined capacity for 2014 is just 40,886 (IBO Report March 2014).

We continue to ask for fiscal transparency and accountability. There is a significant discrepancy in the amount of money per child that contracted providers receive for UPK from both DOE and ACS. I reference that here, because the ACS EarlyLearn model incorporates and leverages a blended funding model that includes UPK. How can we expect the same standards for UPK in an EarlyLearn center that offers less than 25% of the funding that DOE contracted centers receive?

The current administration prides itself on promoting equity and access to quality public education. We hope that the administration will note that the underfunded EarlyLearn initiative is clearly moving the city in the wrong direction. Although research to document the educational efficacy of the EarlyLearn model hasn't been offered, there is much discussion of the fiscal efficiency that the blended funding model has generated. But we should be paying more attention to the educational component of EarlyLearn and asking for the research to support the educational aspect of the model.

It is a daunting task to figure out a sustainable budgetary support structure without making cuts elsewhere that might diminish the gains made by the early childhood advantage. We are acutely aware of the financial and ethical challenges facing this committee as you grapple with the decisions that need to be made. We know that you want to make decisions that are both fiscally prudent and at the same time supportive of children and families. As always, CSA remains committed to working with our partners on the committee and with the various agencies to ensure we are doing what's best for our city's children and families. If we can be of any assistance in planning for the future, we hope that you will call on us to be a part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Randi Herman  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Testimony of the United Federation of Teachers  
Before the  
New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Women's Issues  
Regarding the Administration for Children's Services Fiscal Year '15 Budget  
March 24, 2014

Good afternoon Chairman Levin and Chairwoman Cumbo and the members of the General Welfare and Women's Issues committees. My name is Anne Goldman, and I am Vice President for Non-Department of Education Members for the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of our union's more than 200,000 members, including more than 20,000 home-based, family child care providers, I want to thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on the mayor's proposed expense budget as it relates to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and child care specifically.

First, we would like to acknowledge the New York City Council for its fierce advocacy fighting for the rights of children and families and for its leadership ensuring the necessary checks and balances to protect the interests of those in our city who have the smallest voice but the greatest need. We appreciate your oversight of the budget process and of the agencies responsible for our children's education and well-being.

We again look to you to lead in the effort to gain more funding for subsidized early child care and for your continued advocacy on behalf of parents and their right to high-quality child care options.

**Looking forward with hope**

This is the first budget in some years where the UFT and child care advocates across the city aren't fighting against proposed massive cuts to the ACS child care budget. Child care as a whole and family child care in particular, suffered under the former mayor. In the recent past, the Bloomberg administration proposed tens of millions of dollars in cuts year after year, and it was the members of this body that stood up and blocked the administration's attempts to balance its budget by decimating ACS. Last year alone the City Council restored over \$60 million dollars of funding to child care, including \$11 million that went directly to Family Child Care which is the home-based care provided by UFT Child Care Providers. We are excited and thankful that last year's City Council's restorations have been base-lined in the FY 2015 Preliminary budget.

The policies enacted concurrent with these cuts were equally damaging to family child care—principally, the EarlyLearn redesign forced many providers to find new networks to affiliate with, causing chaos for parents whose children lost the caregivers and educators with whom they'd formed strong bonds. Added to its poor implementation, EarlyLearn caused serious delays in provider payment, worsened by attempts to collect money from hastily closed networks impaired by expired city contracts and by allowing networks to pay family child providers less than the already too low market rate, despite the fact that networks are paid a per-child rate that

is often higher than the market rate. Compounding matters for network providers, many networks also charge the provider an administration fee—often a per child, per month amount—further reducing their compensation from a starting point that is already lower than the market rate, which itself is already low. We are now beginning to receive reports that some networks are raising the administrative fee that they charge their providers.

The city has entered a new era with a new administration taking the helm at City Hall and at the Administration for Children's Services. We approach the deliberation over the city's proposed Fiscal Year 2015 ACS budget with a sense of hope that there will now be a greater emphasis on expanding access to quality child care and respecting parents' rights to choose the child care which best fits their needs. We are looking forward to working with Commissioner Gladys Carrion in her new role. She has been a tireless advocate for child care on the state level and we believe that our members and the families we serve will benefit from her stewardship over the ACS.

### **Increase Family Access**

Working families depend on child care to maintain their employment and to ensure their children receive quality early education. For parents and guardians working to support families at the lowest income levels, high quality, reliable child care is a must, and affordability is the critical element. New York City's high cost of living can place even basic needs out of reach for those living at or under the poverty line. The statistics on poverty and the working poor in our city in the aftermath of the country's recession are staggering. A recent report published by the Coalition for the Homeless found the number of children sleeping in shelters rose eight percent last year, reaching a level of 22,712 in January 2014, the highest in history.

In a February 2012 review of the current research on gaps in poverty, income and educational achievement, the *New York Times* highlighted findings from a number of studies offering a sobering view on the impact of the lack of access to high-quality early education and care. According to the University of California, Los Angeles, "by the time high-income children start school, they have spent about 400 hours more than poor children in literacy activities." Overall the researchers found that over the past several decades, higher-income parents have intensified their investment in their children's education, while lower-income parents are "increasingly stretched for time and resources." More recent data from Stanford University, 2013, show that disadvantaged children begin school at a deficit and the gap only widens over time.

Unfortunately, too few New York City working families can afford early child care without the assistance to pay for it. While thousands of low-income New Yorkers, predominantly families of color, depend on family child providers, according to the City only 27 percent of income-eligible families currently receive child care subsidies. Our city has fallen woefully short in meeting the need.

Our city's families need greater access to child care and quality early education. Every year that eligible families don't receive subsidies, we allow the gap to widen placing vulnerable children at a significant disadvantage. Additionally, a parent's right to choose the type of child care that best fits their family's need, which is clearly defined in federal law, must be respected by the City. Quite simply, if a parent chooses to send their child to a center, they should be allowed to

do so. And if they prefer to send their child to family child care, that should be their choice. Expanding access to early child care is an economic and educational imperative.

### **Educating and caring for our earliest learners**

We are especially encouraged that Mayor Bill de Blasio has galvanized the public will and focused his administration on the importance of offering universal, full-time pre-kindergarten to all four-year-old children in our city. His leadership on this issue has dialed up the conversation throughout the state on the benefits of high-quality early childhood education and how it fosters lifelong learning.

Educating and caring for our earliest learners is a high priority for the UFT and the professional development and credentialing services we provide to our union's family child care providers is evidence of our commitment. We've partnered with curriculum development teams from public television and the UFT Teacher Center to deliver age appropriate instructional support for our members' use in home-based settings. Strengthening early child care options and expanding access for families seeking educationally sound, subsidized care is smart policy for our city's future.

### **Closing Thoughts**

In closing, I reiterate our gratitude to the City Council and the members of the General Welfare and Women's Issues committees for your strong leadership and advocacy on behalf of the children we care for, especially with respect to their rights to a high-quality education in a safe and caring environment.

We are excited to have an administration that we feel will engage all stakeholders in making our City's child care system work better. It is our firm belief that by investing now in our city's children and families, our city will reap long-term economic and social benefits.



**FOR THE RECORD**



**FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES**

Testimony prepared for  
The New York City Council General Welfare Committee's Public Hearing  
on  
The Mayor's FY 2014-2015 Preliminary Budget  
March 2014

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The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) is an anti-poverty, policy and advocacy organization with a membership network of nearly 200 human services organizations and churches that operate over 1,200 programs throughout the New York City metro area. Together we serve over 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers of all ages, ethnicities and denominations each year. Our members represent every level of New York's social service system, which gives us a comprehensive view of the complex social problems that face human service organizations today. This strengthens our work educating decision makers and making sure that the needs of our network are heard in the legislative process.

We believe the success of our city is measured not only by economic growth and job development, but also in terms of how we take care of those who are in need, and assist them to overcome barriers and regain independence. FPWA applauds Mayor de Blasio for prioritizing critical steps to address inequality in his first preliminary budget. We are particularly grateful for Mayor de Blasio's decision to direct \$4.3 million in FY 2014 and \$17.4 million in FY 2015 to implement an affordable housing protection for HASA clients at 30 percent.

Investments in human services are critical to economic recovery, as the nonprofit health care and social assistance sector is by far the largest employer in the city's private economy. According to recent reports developed by the Human Services Council of New York City and Fiscal Policy Institute, human services programs have a positive ripple effect well beyond the immediate service. In this testimony we will address program and policy issues related to the Administration of Children Services and Human Resources Administration/ Department of Social Services.

## **Administration for Children Services (ACS)**

### **Universal Pre-Kindergarten**

FPWA commends Mayor de Blasio's commitment to expanding the city's early childhood programming. The Mayor's "Ready to Launch" articulates an aggressive, but feasible, plan for providing free, full day UPK for as many as 53,000 children in the fall of 2014, with the goal of full expansion to 73,250 seats in the fall of 2015. The strong educational foundation created by high-quality universal pre-kindergarten provides the opportunity for every child, regardless of his or her family's income, to succeed and is one of the strongest tools we have to fight inequality.

However, as New York City strengthens educational opportunities for all four-year-olds, there must be a greater and more stable commitment to investing in child care for children from birth to age three who are eligible for subsidized child care. Throughout the recession, zero to three programming has faced serious funding cuts, resulting in a lack of availability of infant and toddler spots, inadequate compensation for early childhood teachers and staff, and the destabilization of the early childhood system. ***FPWA encourages New York City to also address and commit to stable, quality child care for all of the city's most vulnerable children.***

### **EarlyLearn**

The EarlyLearn system provides a model for providing a publically funded comprehensive early child care and education system that has the potential to significantly improve the quality of childcare in New York City. Many aspects of this model have been long promoted by FPWA and other child advocates and were designed to strengthen a childcare system plagued with varying levels of quality. While FPWA supports these efforts to increase the quality of childcare in New York City, after a year

of implementation, we find ourselves increasingly concerned regarding aspects of this model that have inadvertently created a negative impact on many EarlyLearn childcare providers and the quality of services they provide. A majority of these challenges revolve around the lack of financial support for EarlyLearn providers, especially in the areas of insufficient per child reimbursement rates and increased burden of health care and liability insurance coverage.

As it is currently constructed, the per-child reimbursement rate is insufficient to cover all the costs of a high quality early learning program. Our member agencies report a constant financial struggle to adequately provide compensation for staff, cover ever rising insurance costs, and afford operating and administrative expenses. They are struggling to maintain quality programs in a system that is continuously shifting more and more financial burden onto the provider. These financial struggles directly affect the quality of services provided to children, many of whom are from high need neighborhoods and require additional supports in order to ensure future academic and personal success.

Additional financial strain was placed upon our member agencies earlier this year when childcare employees lost access to the city funded Central Insurance system. Due to the insufficient level of reimbursement, providers were forced to ask employees to cover 15% of the cost of their coverage. With the average childcare teacher in New York City earning just over \$32,000, this 15% contribution was tantamount to a salary cut of approximately \$5,000. For many, the cost of coverage was too high and many chose to opt out of the program. A survey of our member agencies revealed that in any given program between 30-60% of employees opted out of health care coverage. ***FPWA urges ACS to work with advocates and providers to determine an appropriate rate that fully funds the cost of high quality programs and recommends the City Council to continue monitoring this issue.***

FPWA endorses the Campaign for Children's Transition Plan for strengthening New York City's early learning system. The plan focuses on three priority areas—quality, investment, and expansion—and provides the incoming mayoral administration a timeline for implementation. Highlights of this plan include:

- Appropriately compensate well-trained early learning staff, including developing a career ladder that matches compensation with qualifications, creating a unified, consistent salary scale for EarlyLearn professionals based on qualifications, and ensuring salary parity for equally credentialed staff in the public school system and early care system.
- Increase the EarlyLearn rate so that providers can meet standards, provide fair compensation, have appropriate staffing, address employee contribution for health insurance, and appropriately fund costs of operations, administration and materials for children.
- Expand existing contracts for baselined early childhood programs by one year, allowing for the creation of a procurement process that gives priority to currently funded quality programs and brings all child care programs funded by ACS into the same contracting cycle.
- Ensure programs are educational and enriching to promote academic achievement and social and emotional development and are appropriately meeting the needs of English Language learners, Dual Language Learners and children with special needs.

### **Reduce the Financial and Administrative Burden for Working Families**

In February 2011, former Mayor Bloomberg imposed a cut of \$13 million in funding annually for subsidized child care by raising parent fees from 12% to 17% of the adjusted family income and to triple the minimum co-payment from \$5 per week to \$15 per week. The fee had already been raised the prior year from 10% to 12%. Cumulatively, this amounts to a 7% increase over two years, causing a situation in which families with the lowest and most marginal incomes are being the hardest hit.

Since the increase of parent fees, some of our member agencies have reported that their programs have lost children whose parents can no longer afford the fee. Given the high cost of living in New York City, the increase of parent fee deepens the burden of many low-income parents, as they are already forced to make difficult choices between the most basic expenses such as food, rent, utilities, medicine, and clothing for growing children. ***FPWA strongly recommends the Mayor and the City Council to reverse the parent fee increase implemented in February 2011.***

### **Restore Priority 8 and 9 eligibility categories that were eliminated in FY 2009-2010 budget**

The Priority 8 eligibility category provides vouchers and access to center-based care to parents who are not able to provide care for their children during the day because they are either ill or incapacitated. Providing support for these parents would ensure young children receive the care they need, which is a low-cost preventive measure and an investment in the well-being of children, especially in vulnerable families.

The Priority 9 eligibility category provides vouchers and access to center-based care to low-income (non-public assistance) households for child care coverage while parents are looking for work. The funds eliminated in FY 2009-2010 totaled \$4.2 million. To be successful in their job search, parents need access to subsidies for child care services. Providing support for child care in the job seeking process is an essential piece of the puzzle that would enable parents to focus on looking for work and therefore, prevents families from falling deeper into crisis.

The elimination of these priority code eligibility categories has negatively impacted struggling families as they can no longer access vital care for their children. In addition, child care centers are also left with vacancies that can't be filled by children that need care because the elimination of these categories has made them ineligible for services. ***FPWA recommends the Mayor and the City Council to restore funding for these priorities.***

### **Improve NYC's Foster Care System by Providing Better Support to Youth Aging Out of Care**

Youth aging out are an extremely overrepresented population among New York's homeless. In New York City, it is estimated that between 18-26% of foster care youth who age out become homeless and, on any night, many former foster youth can be found sleeping on the streets, park benches, couch-surfing, or in shelters. The urgency of this problem is compounded by the fact that while the foster care census continues to decline in New York, the largest percent of children in foster care are over the age of twelve. Although youth may leave the foster care system when they turn 18 years old, an increasing number remain until they age out at 21. Below are four proposals for improving New York City's child welfare system and providing better support to youth aging out of care.

#### **1) Create an inter-agency task force to improve coordination of care**

The common refrain from provider agencies and foster youth is that city agencies function inefficiently in regard to housing and in regard to communication surrounding housing policies. To alleviate this systemic strain, advocates have proposed that an inter-agency task force be formed between ACS, DYCD, DOE, CUNY, NYCHA, NY/NYIII, HRA, DOHMH, and DHS. Such an organizational centralization would be ripe for streamlining requirements for qualification to apply for services and assistance, and recognizing the circumstances and challenges for foster youth. This task force would have the power to improve coordination among city agencies to ensure better services to youth aging out of foster care. In particular, we recommend that this task force streamline the process of securing

housing, ensure proper transition and supports for youth with mental health issues, and increase the accessibility of safe, permanent housing for youth leaving foster care.

## **2) Develop Aftercare capacity to support youth until age 25**

While housing and improved coordination of care are essential, youth need more than a place to reside to continue living independently. Developing aftercare with the capacity to support youth until age 25 could nurture that independence. Currently, the ACS lacks both funding allocation and clear guidelines for a support system for aged out youth. This leads to insufficient supervisory efforts not on par with much more needed investments such as family support and counseling. ***FPWA recommends that ACS develop after care capacity to support youth already aged out of foster care until age 25 by providing housing, health and mental health, education and vocational training assistance.*** In addition to support after aging out of care, foster youth require experience and supplemental aid to successfully transition to independent life.

## **3) Restore, create and/or increase funding for housing programs that aid both youth aging out and former foster youth**

Young adults need a chance to practice living independently before they are completely on their own. Experts say that young adults should have the opportunity to make and learn from mistakes as they become independent. Funding cuts over the past few years to crucial programs have reduced the ability of youth to attain affordable and sustainable housing after “aging out” of care. ***FPWA recommends the Mayor and the City Council to consider the following ways to reverse this trend:***

- Reinstitute discharge grants for youth aging out of care;
- Provide funding for trial discharges;
- Increase the ACS housing subsidy to reflect current rental rates for low-income housing;
- Increase funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth;
- Create a new NY-NY IV agreement which will increase the supply of slots for supportive housing; and
- Increase the number of NY/NY III supportive housing units for all youth aging out of the foster care system.

## **4) Reduce barriers to accessing housing through NYCHA and improve its coordination with ACS**

A key and crucial resource to “aged out” foster youth is the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), which helps to place them in affordable housing situations once they reach independent living age. While NYCHA is a tremendous help on this step, there are many areas in dire need of improvement. One step would be reducing onerous requirements for receiving the presumptive budget letter that NYCHA requires youth aging out to get from the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to show proof of income if they are not employed. It is difficult to process and obtain these letters in time from ACS and HRA because of the age restrictions on when the youth can apply for the letter. Foster care agencies and foster youth should be able to apply earlier so they can get it approved in time to receive housing. Youth must also be given more viable choices in safe, clean apartments. Safety concerns and requests for security transfers must also be made a priority and addressed in a timely way. ***FPWA encourages the City Council to examine ways that would reduce barriers to accessing housing, fund programs that help youth transition to independent living, extend aftercare and improve coordination of care.***

## **Ensure Preventive Services for Children and Families**

Reducing barriers to accessing housing, funding programs that help youth transition to independent living, extending aftercare and improving coordination of care are all means of improving NYC's child welfare system and providing better support to youth aging out of care directly. However, youth will also benefit from program and service improvements. One such modification is the revision of performance-based funding.

The ACS has recently implemented a performance-based funding plan for preventive services providers, which requires that the contracted providers must open 25% of their cases within the specified timeframe or they will lose 10% of their yearly funding. Preventive services providers have concerns about performance-based funding because of the effort and energy that has to be spent pursuing new cases when utilization is low, which diverts providers from more meaningful program activities. Additionally, program budgets are very tight, so forfeiting 10% of their budgets may cripple providers that have to produce matching funds (up to 5% of budget) and often rely on fundraising to make up the difference.

FPWA believes that the performance-based funding plan should be revised to address these implementation concerns. Since preventive services providers have always successfully relied on the scorecard to monitor and propel system shifts, it is not necessary to use performance-based funding as an incentive to move providers towards a 12-month length of stay. The reality is that providers are willingly helping every family and child they can and working with ACS through the process. Many preventive services providers have turned the corner on this expectation and are closing more than 50% of their cases within 12 months. Small community based preventive services providers play a vital role and should not be forced to close due to lack of sufficient contract funding.

## **Maintain investment in Preventive Services; Restore funding cuts for After-Care Services, Foster Boarding Home rates, and "One Year Home" Permanency Campaign**

Preventive services are a cost-effective component of the child welfare system – each slot costs about \$9,500 and serves an entire family; whereas foster care costs about \$36,000 per child. In order to provide appropriate services to families who need assistance, it is imperative to provide stability to the system and ensure sufficient capacity. ***FPWA encourages the Mayor and the City Council to continue fully supporting the wise investment of child welfare preventive services by restoring the \$4.15 million cut from previous budgets in after-care support services to help support the reunification process.***

In addition, ***FPWA urges the Mayor and the City Council to restore the \$6.9 million delayed increase for foster care boarding home rates that were cut in previous budgets.*** As it is, foster care agencies are not adequately resourced and this delayed increase will force agencies to make significant cuts in staff and/or services. In these difficult economic times, agencies responsible for serving New York City's most vulnerable children and families deserve our support. ***FPWA also urges the Mayor to restore the \$9.9 million cut from previous budgets to support permanency for foster care youth.*** In order for agencies to implement permanency plans they must be financially supported in this difficult and challenging work.

### Invest in Citywide Transitional Jobs Program

Transitional jobs are a particular form of publicly subsidized employment which seeks to help those who are "hard to employ"—long-term unemployed, TANF recipients, disconnected youth and people reentering from the criminal justice system—overcome employment barriers with paid, short-term employment that combines real work, skill development and supportive services. Participants are provided training in both necessary soft skills in the work force and in a specific industry/skill. Often, participants are retained for permanent employment in the jobs they had been placed into for a subsidized period. Even when they are not, these participants have a much higher chance of finding permanent employment afterward, and they are provided with help in their job search process.

In many parts of the country, transitional jobs have proven to lead to increased employment levels and wages for those that have participated in such programs. For example, with the Los Angeles Transitional Subsidized Employment Program, workers received wages of \$10 per hour; were required to participate for 6-12 months; received supports including job coaching, child care, transportation costs; and the target population was mostly TANF recipients, with some dislocated workers. The number of people placed was 10,719 at 1,403 employers. The average time in subsidized employment was about 7 months and the average earnings were \$6,057.

In New York City, some existing programs within the Human Resources Administration (HRA) are already doing this work. However, they target rather small portions of the existing estimated 346,860 unemployed population as of August 2013. ***FPWA recommends the city to fund a large-scale transitional jobs program, especially given these programs' proven success based on previous and existing transitional jobs programs throughout the nation and in New York.***

### Need for Greater Efficiency and Efficacy in the City's Welfare-to-Work Structure

New York City receives the majority of New York State's Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) and is currently allocated \$425 million in FFFS funding, which includes \$99 million of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. The city currently spends approximately 73% (or \$72 million) of these TANF funds on welfare-to-work programs including Back to Work, The Work Experience Program (WEP), WeCare, and general employment services.

Yet, despite this funding emphasis, these programs consistently fail to achieve the goal of helping public assistance recipients find and secure steady and remunerative employment. For example, the City spends \$57 million a year on the Back to Work program which has very low job placement and retention outcomes—48% of clients didn't retain their jobs past 90 days and 75% didn't retain their jobs past 180 days. In addition, most WEP participants live well below the federal poverty level.

***FPWA recommends the Mayor and his newly appointed Commissioners to reallocate the City's TANF funding towards poverty alleviation and more effective employment programs and services.*** More FFFS funding should be directed to meeting basic needs, such as increasing the shelter allowance and basic public assistance grant; effective job creation, through the expansion of transitional jobs and wage subsidies, particularly in jobs that can lead to livable wages; and targeted education and job training programs.

## **Reverse Mayor's 2011 Budget Action Reducing Broker's Fees and Vouchering Security Deposits**

Households receiving public assistance have had very few housing options due to below market rental payments and administrative barriers in retaining benefits. In the adopted budget of FY 2011-2012, former Mayor Bloomberg imposed a policy to reduce broker's fees to half of a month's rent and vouchering security deposits. This funding reduction totals \$4.8 million.

An online survey was conducted by Shubert Botein Policy Associates months after the implementation of the policy. Survey respondents reported that these changes have significantly affected the HASA clients they serve, with the change of brokers' fees being the most challenging. Findings of the survey show:

- Over 95% of clients involved in a housing search have experienced one or both policy changes as a barrier to housing placement
- 79% of respondents report that the security deposit change poses a significant barrier to their clients
- 94% report that the brokers' fees change is a significant barrier, with 50% reporting that it has prevented placement for one or more clients

Since this policy went into effect, many brokers no longer work with households receiving cash assistance, which further limits an already extremely limited pool of available housing for these families, including people who receive HASA. We have also found that brokers are asking clients on a fixed income to pay the other half of the fee on their own. Some landlords refuse to lease apartments to applicants receiving cash assistance unless they are able to pay security deposits in cash. ***FPWA strongly recommends the Mayor and the City Council to restore funding for broker's fee and security deposits.***

## **Conclusion**

We thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify. We hope that you will consider our budget priorities and recommendations on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for the FY 2014 budget during this year's budget negotiation process.





**Homeless Services United, Inc.**

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**Testimony of Christy Parque, Executive Director  
Homeless Services United, Inc.**

**FY15 Department of Homeless Services  
Preliminary Budget Hearings**

**FOR THE RECORD**

**March 24, 2014**

My name is Christy Parque and I am the Executive Director of Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition of over 50 non-profit agencies serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in New York City. HSU provides advocacy, information, and training to member agencies to expand their capacity to deliver high-quality services. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers.

Homeless Service United's member agencies operate hundreds of programs including shelters, drop-in centers, food pantries, Home Base, and outreach and prevention services. Each day, HSU member programs work with thousands of homeless families and individuals, preventing shelter entry whenever possible through counseling, legal services, and public benefits assistance among many other supports. Our member agencies provide high quality and compassionate emergency shelter to nearly 30,000 homeless New Yorkers nightly. There are a multitude of underlying societal problems which contribute to someone's housing instability. Our clients confront high housing costs, difficulty finding work, mental and physical illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence and are particularly vulnerable during financially hard times such as these.

HSU, as the organization that represents the non-profit homeless shelter organizations, has great interest in policy changes that impact homeless services delivery to our clients and to ensuring that our missions, staff, and programs are providing the most compassionate, effective, and efficient services to transform lives from homelessness to being stably housed.

**CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO A COMPLEX PROBLEM**

Solving New York City's homeless problem is complex and the solutions required need to be as diverse as the population they aim to serve. Homeless service providers toil at the cross section of many of society's problems. It is precisely for these reasons that we must support the vital services my members provide and ensure that they are available to help the 52,270<sup>1</sup> people who resided in shelters last night and the thousands more aided through outreach and drop-in centers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Social-Services/DHS-Daily-Report/k46n-sa2m>

**Create a new rental housing subsidy and leverage existing federal permanent subsidized housing options.**

We applaud the Council for their Proposed Resolution. No. 123-A. This important piece of legislation paves the way for the City of New York and State of New York to work together to create a rental subsidy program for the homeless.

The creation of a well thought out and flexible rental subsidy is just one of the solutions necessary to meet the need. Along with creating resources for those in shelter, we must create options to help the vulnerably housed from entering shelter in the first place.

The City must return to its previous policy of prioritizing and utilizing a portion of New York City's available Section 8 vouchers and NYCHA units for those residing in shelters or in immediate risk of entering.

**Increase funding for eviction and homeless prevention including legal services, eviction and foreclosure prevention, and aftercare services for the formerly homeless.**

Flexible and adaptable services that meet the varied needs of people at risk of homelessness are critical. Many people at risk for homelessness only require one-time advice and counsel (and perhaps one-time financial assistance), while others may need a higher level of intensive support over a significant period of time. It is important to allocate financial resources both for service provision and for direct financial assistance. Ideally, the larger homelessness prevention strategy allows for access to housing resources in the form of subsidies, public housing slots, and supportive housing.

**NON-PROFITS AS A RESOURCE AND ASSET**

New York City is fortunate to have a broad network of experienced non-profit professionals who know how to solve the City's homeless crisis. Given the tools and sufficient resources, we can work together with our government partners to develop real and permanent housing solutions. Our greatest assets are our staff and we must honor and support their work by providing them a living wage. Most of our workers have not had an increase in their wages in five years.

***We call upon the City to honor its commitment to these heroes by providing them with salaries that reflect their level of professionalism, effort, and hard work, as well as provide them with regular COLA's.***

Unfortunately, over the last five years we have seen our ability to meet the need for our services diminish. Year after year, we have been subjected to budget cuts through PEGS and poorly conceived performance metric evaluations that were nothing more than a PEG in disguise. These cuts resulted in millions of dollars in critical funding drained away from our budgets, at a time when the City is facing unprecedented levels of homelessness.

**For example:**

In 2009-10, the City's businesses were starting to emerge from the recession but individuals were still reeling from the economic downturn. In the FY10 adopted budget, we saw a plan by the City to further "incentive" providers to perform well. In FY10, DHS called for a combined cut to family and adult shelters' budgets by \$9.364 million through incentives and performance based outcomes. The family shelter cut alone was 7.2% with 4.3% of that was an across the board cut without a reduction in expected outcomes or deliverables by the non-profits. The message was clear, "Do more with less and failure to perform will result in more cuts."

Despite voicing opposition and caution regarding the cuts, non-profits were met with another round of cuts to Adult shelters in FY11 and FY12 through increasing performance outcomes like “move outs” of shelter when there were decreasing options for permanent housing placements. The consequences of a poor PIP (Performance Incentive Plan) score penalize the provider and can have serious impact on the facility’s budget, but more importantly, an overly punitive financial penalty harms the clients because it results in a reduction of core services.

After these budget cuts were imposed, many shelters were forced to reduce the very thing that has the greatest impact on the lives of the shelter residents: the staff. Often times this resulted in eliminating, reducing, and combining staff positions. In some cases, housing specialists and case management positions which are two different disciplines and require different skill sets, were combined.

*HSU cautioned in our FY10 executive budget testimony that, “Cuts of this nature will undoubtedly result in increased caseloads for staff and diminished and reduced services for the shelter residents. Length of stay will increase in shelters and the numbers leaving shelter will decrease and New York City will be faced with the perfect storm for an explosion of homelessness.”*

Unfortunately, our prescient testimony from 2009 was realized, with the highest levels of homelessness in New York City in modern history and the average length of stay in shelter swelling to over 400 days. We must reverse this trend by fully resourcing shelters to place the clients at the center for service delivery.

#### **Stabilize & Evaluate**

Shortly after the elimination of the Advantage program in 2012, DHS removed the financial penalty for family shelters associated with their current evaluation tool, the Shelter Performance Report. We applaud them for recognizing that in times of crisis it is unwise and bad policy to remove the resources and tools of the providers charged with serving New York’s homeless families. Unfortunately, the adult shelters are still operating under a performance system that routinely financially penalizes providers for not obtaining unrealistic performance targets. In a recent analysis by HSU using DHS data for CY 2012, less than 30% of providers achieved their targets. Any system designed to measure performance must be fair, transparent and take into consideration the economic and housing climate.

***We have proposed to DHS that for the duration of FY15, the financial penalties associated with performance incentive systems be waived, to allow for an opportunity to collaborate with providers on developing more realistic and meaningful targets and system for evaluation of their providers and programs***

#### **Capital and New Needs**

The tragic New York Time’s December 2013 articles on the Coates family while staying at the Auburn Shelter cast an important light on the security, staffing, and capital needs of New York City owned and operated shelters. We were heartened to see the City’s commitment to addressing security and safety concerns addressed in Mayor de Blasio’s preliminary budget.

The City must make the same commitment to its non-profit providers who both own and operate their own buildings and City owned buildings. Many providers are operating under contracts that have not seen increases for maintenance or major capital repairs in decades, if ever. Providers are routinely cited by OTDA for repairs that they have submitted to DHS for new needs and been denied due to budget constraints. With decreased capacity and vacancy rates hovering around one percent, this creates an additional toll on facilities and units. Providers are required to make units client ready in as little as four

hours which makes it nearly impossible to do major maintenance and repairs necessary for building upkeep.

***We call upon DHS, and other relevant City and State agencies to conduct a thorough assessment of the maintenance and capital needs of their non-profit shelter providers. Included must be a review of the "new needs" that have been submitted, and rejected or placed on hold, in the past five years along with a plan for resolving the maintenance and capital needs and any violations associated with them.***

#### **CLIENT CENTERED SERVICES: JOBS, EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

If we are to truly help the New Yorkers who come to us for assistance to resolve their housing crisis, we must be prepared and equipped to help meet their needs. This means a shift from a "one size fits all" mentality of re-housing of the past years. We must have staff trained and supported to assess the unique strengths of their client caseload and have the tools to serve them.

##### **Physical and Mental Health Services**

We are grateful for the commitment of the City Council for the last three years restoring proposed Medical Services PEG cuts for the Adult Shelters and to the wisdom of the Mayor de Blasio for including this funding in his preliminary FY15 budget. If we recognize the need for these services for adults then we must recognize the critical need on the family and adult family side and consider expanding mental and physical health services on-site either through partnerships with local hospitals, clinics or our partners in Health Care for the Homeless.

##### **Employment & Education**

Employment specialists and education and GED specialists provide a unique connection for our clients to see a permanent way out of homelessness. In FY11, as part of a PEG exercise, DHS removed employment specialist from shelter budgets. It was counterproductive and counter intuitive to cut the staff services that *directly* impact that likelihood that a client, who is able to work, will obtain a job that enables them to move from shelter.

##### **Recreation Services**

Due to a FY10 PEG, we saw the final chipping away of critical recreation services for adults and families. Prior to entry into adult or family shelters, many clients have had few positive experiences with socializing and participating in a healthy community. Shelter recreation programs are a relatively low cost investment in homeless people that provide healthy socialization and communication skills that benefit clients in shelter and when they exit. Recreation programs address cycles of violence and create safe forums for disclosure and exploration of alternatives to lives consumed by abuse, violence and shame.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for your time and commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of homeless and at-risk New Yorkers and those who serve them. Homeless Services United looks forward to working with you to realize solutions that will allow our members' vital programs to continue to provide our neediest New Yorkers with services that support and motivate them to thrive in the future.

**Center for Court Innovation Testimony  
New York City Council  
Committee on Juvenile Justice, Committee on General Welfare, and Committee on  
Women's Issues  
March 24, 2004**

Good morning Chairperson Cabrera, Chairperson Levin, and Chairperson Cumbo. My name is Raye Barbieri and I am the Senior Director of Youth and Community Programs and Planning of the Center for Court Innovation. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I am here to urge the Juvenile Justice, General Welfare and Women's Issues Committees, as they are considering the Mayor's proposed budget, to support funding to help courts and their community and government partners promote the safety of the public while addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families. As many of you know, the Center for Court Innovation is a public/private partnership that is devoted to reducing crime, assisting victims, and improving public confidence in the justice system. We accomplish these tasks through research, technical assistance, and, of course, through our demonstration projects, many of which focus on juvenile justice. We operate juvenile justice projects in each of the city's five boroughs.

Among the Center's many youth projects are alternative to detention and alternative to placement programs in Queens and Staten Island; youth courts in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island; unique mental health programs for system-involved youth in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island; anti-gun violence programs in Crown Heights and the South Bronx; an anti-gang initiative in Harlem; and community courts in Midtown, Red Hook, Harlem, and – in the not-too-distant future – Brownsville, Brooklyn. Our work with young people has given us a unique window into the workings of the State and City juvenile justice systems, and the need for programs like ours, which serve the most vulnerable people in the city.

This is a unique time in New York City's effort to reduce crime while simultaneously reducing reliance on incarceration. Through the efforts of the NYPD, the Courts, Probation, other

government agencies and community based organizations like the Center, New York has debunked the conventional wisdom, proving that you can reduce both crime and incarceration at the same time.

Each of the projects I've just described is a unique partnership between courts, social service providers, government agencies, and communities working together to reduce juvenile offenses, assist young people on the path to law-abiding futures, and improve the quality of life for all residents of New York City. The aim of each of our problem-solving juvenile justice initiatives is to combine accountability with help: by using meaningful alternatives to confinement and linking young people to social services such as drug treatment, counseling, and after school programming, these programs offer young people the opportunity to avoid being caught in a juvenile justice system that has failed to address their needs, as well as the public safety concerns of the community.

A key focus for the Center is working with vulnerable children and families in all five boroughs of New York City. Each year, we serve well over 2,300 children who are at varying stages of Justice System involvement. Examples of the Center's work includes the youth courts in Red Hook, Harlem, Staten Island, Brownsville, and Queens, where local teenagers hear real-life cases involving their peers, using positive peer pressure to ensure that teens who have committed minor offenses learn from their mistakes, make amends to victims and their community and receive the help they need to avoid deeper involvement in the justice system. The Red Hook and Harlem Community Justice Centers hear the cases of young people arrested on delinquency charges, fostering accountability while linking young people and families to services such as drug treatment, tutoring and job training. The Staten Island Youth Justice Center houses an alternative to detention program, a youth court, and the City's first Respite program, which I described earlier. And in the Bronx, the Center provides therapy and supportive services to young people, ages 3 -15, who have been subjected to or witnessed abuse and violence.

Our Youth Justice Board brings together City teenagers to develop thoughtful recommendations to address public safety concerns and promote improved services for at-risk young people. The Board has examined juvenile reentry, school safety, crossover youth and the city's alternative to detention programs in the past, and this year is investigating truancy. The Crown Heights

Community Mediation Center works with community members of all ages to resolve disputes and facilitate workshops in area schools around conflict resolution techniques, and also operates Crown Heights Save Our Streets, an anti-gun-violence program. Other Center programs, like the Attendance Achievement Program, provide two schools in Harlem and three in the Bronx with new tools to address chronic absences, reducing absenteeism for program participants, and helping them move up to the next grade level. The program aims to support students and their families in improving school attendance and to ease burdens on the juvenile justice system, family courts and child welfare authorities whose caseloads are full of young truants.

The Center's QUEST (Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens) and READY (Richmond Engagement Activities for Determined Youth) projects are alternative-to-detention programs in Queens and Staten Island which combine social services and youth development programming with supervision and court monitoring for young people with cases pending in Family Court. These projects also save taxpayer dollars: the average cost of detention is \$651 per youth, per day, while the Center's ATD programs operate at a fraction of that cost and produce much better results. In Queens and the Bronx, projects also provide a comprehensive, coordinated response to young people with mental illness in the juvenile justice system. Too often young people are removed from their homes for mental health concerns because judges do not have access to effective community-based services, only to learn to their dismay that such services are also unavailable in placement facilities. These projects aims to stop this alarming trend and to provide punishment with help for young people caught in the justice system. This successful mental health initiative will be replicated in Staten Island this spring.

The Center also operates a pioneering juvenile mental health project called QUEST Futures, the first attempt in New York City to provide a comprehensive, coordinated response to young people with mental illness in the juvenile justice system. To date, QUEST Futures has conducted mental health screens or assessments of more than 700 young people in Queens and has served 360 young people and their families. In the Bronx, 140 young people have been screened or assessed, and nearly 60 have enrolled in the Futures program. Staten Island Futures has just begun enrolling its first clients this month.

Launched in January of 2012, the Adolescent Diversion Program is a pilot initiative to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18, spearheaded by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. Center demonstration projects are providing assessments and services to the pilots in all five boroughs, helping to improve the judicial response to 16 and 17 year olds charged with misdemeanors in criminal court. The program provides judges with the tools they need to address offenders' behavior and help young people avoid criminal records and related collateral consequences. The Center also recently completed an evaluation of the adolescent diversion program, which showed that 80 percent of participants fully complied with their mandates and that participants in the program were less likely than comparison cases to be re-arrested on felony charges.

This kind of success doesn't happen without the involvement of dozens of partners. Each of our projects is structured as a public-private partnership, involving collaborations among the courts, police, probation, service providers, and communities. For each dollar the City contributes to the Center, we leverage an additional six dollars in private, state and federal support.

I am here today to request that the City Council continue to support the Center's critical work. The Council's support has been invaluable to the success of the Center for Court Innovation, helping us maintain core operations and launch new initiatives at our problem-solving courts throughout the city, which collectively serve over 60,000 New Yorkers each year.

City Council funding in the last year helped the Center to sustain existing youth projects throughout the five boroughs and introduce several new programs. Among the Center's newest initiatives include:

- *A new approach to human trafficking cases.* In 2013, New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman announced the launch of the New York court system's Human Trafficking Intervention Initiative. This trailblazing program, which the Center for Court Innovation has helped develop and implement, seeks to identify and assist sex trafficking victims, opening the door for thousands across the state to escape a life of abuse and torture.
- *A new approach to misdemeanor cases.* Three out of four cases that make it to criminal court in New York City are misdemeanors – a total of more than 235,000 cases in 2012.



With Brooklyn Justice Initiatives, launched in 2013, the Center provides an expanded array of options for judges in Kings County Criminal Court in Brooklyn. In its initial year, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives will work with 620 defendants and help pilot several of Judge Lippman's priorities – the adolescent diversion courtroom, the human trafficking courtroom and bail reform.

- *Peacemaking.* The Peacemaking Program at the Red Hook Community Justice Center adapts traditional tribal practices to a state court system. Experienced peacemakers from the Navajo Nation help train volunteers using restorative and storytelling techniques adapted from Native American culture. The Peacemaking Program takes a wide range of cases, from assault to shoplifting to family conflicts.

We request Council funding in the amount of \$925,000 to continue this work. In the coming year, we will focus on working to enhance the relationship between justice agencies and New Yorkers. Research tells us that people are more likely to obey the law when they feel that the justice system (not just police, but prosecutors, probation officers, judges and others as well) has treated them with dignity and respect – and given them an opportunity to voice their opinions. We will tackle this issue on multiple fronts in places like Harlem, Brownsville, Crown Heights, Red Hook, Jamaica, and the South Bronx. This includes offering training in procedural justice to front-line justice professionals, improving signage at criminal justice projects to incorporate respectful language, and providing numerous opportunities for local residents to work directly with criminal justice officials on collaborative crime prevention activities.

The Center for Court Innovation looks forward to continuing to work with the New York City Council to improve the justice system's response to the City's most pressing problems. We urge you to support our work and the work of other organizations and government agencies who are improving how courts and their partners tackle the social problems driving the huge caseloads in today's courts and improve the quality-of-life in all neighborhoods in New York. Thank you again. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Finance  
And Committee on General Welfare**

**At the FY 2015 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Honorable Stephen Levin, Chair Committee on General Welfare  
Honorable Julissa Ferreras, Committee on Finance**

**Presented by Gregory Brender, Policy Analyst**

**March 21, 2014**

Thank you Chair Levin and Chair Ferreras for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses, New York City's federation of settlement houses and community centers. UNH member agencies have a deep commitment to early childhood education and many are ACS contracted Early Learn providers. UNH member agencies pioneered many innovative approaches to early childhood education including the blended model that Early Learn sought to replicate.

United Neighborhood Houses strongly supports Mayor de Blasio's plan to expand Universal Pre-Kindergarten and middle school after-school and recognizes that the Early Learn system must be a key part of this expansion in order to meet the needs of the working families we serve. UNH and its member agencies have been working hard in Albany and in their communities to support the Mayor's plan to make school day UPK truly universal. **This important expansion needs to be envisioned as only one critical part of a larger, more complex system serving children and their families ages pre-natal**

through age 4 and their families. The ACS Early Learn system with its more comprehensive day based on the work day instead of the school day can serve children whose parents cannot pick them up or drop them off at school closing and opening hours.

The more comprehensive system that we envision is one wherein

- Full working day (8:00 am-6:00pm) full-year flexible programming is available for both for children and families;
- Community based organizations including Early Learn providers who blend Pre-K with other funding sources continue to provide effective models for delivering these programs and represent a substantial portion of the capacity for program delivery. Early Learn programs should be enhanced by increased funding from a larger investment in UPK not forced to compete with school and community based UPK providers who provide a shorter service but do not require parent co-pays. Early Learn is the most effective delivery system for UPK education for low-income families that need a full work day of care.
- There exists effective coordination between ACS, DOE, DOH, HRA, and other city agencies. This coordination reduces or eliminates many of the current and projected barriers to providing an effective continuum of effective early childhood programs;
- Community based providers receive adequate support for their services to children and families;
- HRA/ACS voucher support program is fully incorporated into an early childhood model based on quality and choice by making it easier for families receiving public assistance to find and enroll in Early Learn programs;
- A high quality program model ensures that parents have the support they need to be actively engaged in their children's early education and the early childhood system itself.

Yet, ACS faces a fiscal crisis. ACS reports that it currently has a \$92 million deficit in its early childhood division alone driven largely by increased utilization of vouchers. Given the powerful movement supporting increased expansion of early childhood education, this should be a time of expansion and improvement for the Early Learn system.

- The City must take immediate action to provide funds that will **close the ACS deficit through new investments in the ACS Early Learn system**. New funds that come into Early Learn from the UPK expansion should be used to expand and improve services not fill a deficit.
- The City and ACS should **finalize a strategy for baselining City Council funded child care and early childhood education programs**. The Mayor's budget incorporates the baselining of City Council funded pre-school programs and family child care networks, but no methodology has

been set for achieving this important goal. Given the need for parents to be ensured of places for the 2014-2015 year, and the need for organizations to plan adequately for the year, we suggest a "modified" procurement process which would be announced ASAP to extend current contracts through the 2015 fiscal year and which would allow for the development of a longer-term contracting process for fiscal year 2016 and beyond.

- ACS must take immediate action to stabilize funding for the Early Learn system. ACS should confirm that **current contracted organizations will be reimbursed by ACS for all incurred expenses in THIS fiscal year**. This decision needs to be made and communicated ASAP if the non-profit community is to survive this fiscal year and be in a position to support implementation of the UPK system in addition to their other early childhood/Early Learn obligations.
- As UPK is fully implemented, **the City should ensure that proper funds are allocated for aging down the system to serve more younger children**. Assuming significant increases in funding for UPK eligible children and a maintenance of other current funding allocated for early childhood programs, ACS should develop a viable strategy for providing spaces for infants and toddlers (ages 6 months -2 years. As you know, programming for this age group will require additional resources to meet staffing requirements, physical improvements at some sites, and more sophisticated family recruitment strategies.
- **The City should move towards establishing salary equity for teachers and other staff**. To attract and keep the required credentialed staff for quality programming, organizations (and schools too) must be able to offer appropriate competitive compensation and benefits. In addition to staff salaries, sufficient funds must be available for staff development and training, the expedited capital resources required to both create new spaces and to maintain existing spaces, and the required levels of administrative support (including covering expenses for insurance, IT and HR obligations, etc.)
- **The Early Learn rate must be adjusted to adequately cover critical expenses not mentioned above**, including but not limited to:
  - adequate health insurance for all employees needing coverage who have no other ` available coverage for themselves and their families;
  - annual salary adjustments in line with adjustments provided to other workers in the educational system;
  - specialized support staff required by but not funded by existing contracts, including social service, mental health, and educational support professionals.

- The City and ACS should **develop a viable policy for "city direct leases,"** many of which are up for renewal in 2014-2015. A significant number of programs operate in sites leased by the City, with payments made directly by the City to the landlords. These leases are for very different square footage amounts based on location and arrangements reached years ago. If they are to be renewed, the financial obligations either must remain with the City or the full lease obligations incorporated in the nonprofit's organizational budgets.
- The City must **resolve any "lease" agreements which may become necessary between ACS and NYCHA.** A large number of NYCHA sites house ACS funded early childhood programs. Many of these sites are now being operated without any formal lease agreements (or lease agreements with minimal "utility" rents) between the providers and NYCHA. Lack of leases hinders the ability of non-profit organizations to finance facility upgrades. Moreover, current ACS contracts include no funds to pay for any potential lease obligations. Resolution of this ACS/NYCHA issue should have no impact on current contracts between the City and non-profit providers.
- The City should move to make enrollment easier for parents and reduce risks of having children removed from early childhood programs. This includes
  - Making information about Early Learn programs available to HRA applicants at job centers.
  - Keeping a centralized waitlist of parents looking for care and making information accessible about openings in ACS centers.
  - Restoring Priority Codes 8 and 9 which served families where a child's parent or guardian is looking work or ill or incapacitated.
  - Reducing paperwork requirements for enrollment such as the requirement that parents provide six weeks of paystubs to prove employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of New York City's children and communities.

**Testimony of the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness  
Before New York City Council Committee on General Welfare**

March 24, 2014

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME REMARKS

Good afternoon. I'm Dona Anderson, director of the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness. I would like to thank the council for holding this hearing to examine the mayor's Preliminary Budget for the Department of Homeless Services and for giving ICPH the opportunity to testify today. As this is the first time we are giving testimony before the new council, we would also like to congratulate Council Member Levin for his appointment as the new chair of the General Welfare Committee.

The Institute's principal purpose is to identify the connections among research, public policy, and practice, with a focus on children and how they are affected by poverty and homelessness. We do this through a twofold approach: by looking at the national context, examining how homeless services are provided in different states and cities around the country; and, more specifically, by focusing on policies and practices in New York City. Our New York City-specific work concentrates on three key areas: education, employment, and housing/shelter.

We recognize that the causes of family homelessness are complex and therefore that approaches to addressing the differing needs of homeless families must be equally multidimensional. These families and children are by no means a homogenous group, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. For some, a brief stay in shelter and a

housing voucher are enough to get and keep families stable. But for those families who stay in shelter for the long term or repeatedly return there, we know that providing housing alone will not solve the problem.

If housing alone were the cause of homelessness, the solutions we need would be far less complicated. There is clearly no one silver bullet; however, there is an opportunity to utilize new and existing resources in a more efficient and targeted way. Higher-need families would benefit greatly from a multipronged approach to service provision that effectively utilizes the time spent in shelter by providing education and employment opportunities, in addition to appropriate housing assistance. The importance of the co-location of these services in shelters, which allow families easy access, cannot be emphasized enough. The reality is that homeless families already encounter numerous obstacles to services, including being able to access to only one HRA Job Center, in Long Island City; without co-located services, many families simply may not have the capacity, time, or resources to travel across the city, and then address the barriers that mainstream services often present once they get there.

New York City's existing family homeless shelter system also offers a unique opportunity to stabilize children in their families. We applaud the City Council and the Administration for taking decisive action to make improvements and investments to some of the existing shelters (namely Catherine Street and Auburn). But considering that there has been a 50 percent increase in the number of children in shelter since 2006, we believe it is of utmost importance that we look beyond simply addressing facilities, and make a concerted push toward more effective service provision, especially as it concerns the needs of children. By providing children with enhanced care and education services, including early child care, pre-K, tutoring, and after-school programs, we can begin to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of the city's most vulnerable children, as well as maximize taxpayer dollars.

ICPH could provide you with numerous statistics that highlight the scope of the problem. Suffice it to say that there are more than 10,000 infants, toddlers, and pre-K aged children

living in shelters today, and that the number of students ages six to 13 living in shelter has increased by 73 percent since 2006. We are doing these children an unforgivable disservice if we fail to recognize that they have immediate needs, which require that we look at how we might improve upon the infrastructure already in place. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, when the City Council, the Administration, the advocacy community, and service providers have undergone a cultural shift change, each wanting to implement more creative, less punitive approaches that focus on building long-term family stability. We have the chance today to look at the current landscape, listen to shelter service providers, and understand the frontline issues they, and the many homeless families who use their services, face.

The impacts of homelessness on children are numerous and well-documented and have long-term consequences for our communities. When we look at budgets, we often talk about the costs of addressing the issue. While we acknowledge that this as an important effort, we need to reframe the discussion to consider the costs of *not* addressing it. When children are involved, we cannot afford to discuss the worthy versus the unworthy poor; ensuring the well-being of every child is an investment in the future.

Simply put, addressing the underlying causes of a family's homelessness will save the City money. Greater investments made now in child-focused shelter practices and initiatives will not only help break the cycle of family homelessness, but will also result in fewer burdens to service systems, including schools child welfare, health care, public assistance, and criminal justice.

## CONCLUSION

The reality today is that shelters are temporary homes for thousands of New York City children. Leveraging the city's existing infrastructure, utilizing our existing tools, and improving upon them to provide children and families with the services and educational supports they need to break the cycle of poverty is one of the best and most logical places to start.



We believe that New York City's homeless children deserve renewed attention and investment, regardless of whether or not new funding for housing programs is made available. When one in three homeless individuals in New York City is a child, the path forward is clear.



Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell  
Associate Executive Director  
Policy and Government Relations

Before the  
New York City Council  
Finance, General Welfare, Women's Issues and Juvenile Justice Committees

Regarding the  
New York City  
Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget

March 24, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gendell, and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Government Relations at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 70-year old independent child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chairs Ferreras, Levin, Cabrera, and Cumbo and the members of the Finance, General Welfare, Women's Issues, and Juvenile Justice Committees for holding today's hearing on the impact of the FY15 Preliminary Budget on the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

This is an exciting time to be testifying about these three agencies, all of which have the potential to dramatically improve the lives of so many New Yorkers. Our new Mayor, the three new Commissioners and the City Council have all embraced addressing income inequality and compassionately helping the City's most vulnerable. These three agencies will play a lead role in making this happen.

After years of advocating for the restoration of the same funding and child care slots, we are now here to testify about how we can strengthen and expand social services in New York City. We are extremely grateful that millions of dollars for ACS, DHS and HRA have been baselined, including the funding for thousands of slots in child care centers and family child care networks, Teen RAPP, and emergency food programs. We were thrilled when Mayor de Blasio declared the budget dance to be over and this Preliminary Budget takes some critical steps to towards expanding and strengthening the social service network for children and families.

CCC looks forward to working with the new Administration and the City Council to reach our shared goals—to protect the safety of New York City's children, to lift New Yorkers out of poverty, to ensure all New Yorkers have a safe and stable home in which to live, to ensure all families have access to high quality, affordable child care in their communities, and to markedly enhance the well-being of children in every NYC neighborhood. While we have a long way to go to meet these goals, this Preliminary Budget starts us on the right track.

In the new administration's first three months, there have already been plans discussed to expand full-day pre-k to all four year olds, increase the supply of affordable housing, remove children from inhospitable homeless shelters, create a new rental assistance program for homeless families and increase the minimum wage. We look forward to partnering with the Administration and the City Council to turn these visions and plans into reality.

#### **Human Resources Administration (HRA)**

"We have to make our government work for New Yorkers who need a helping hand – not against them. I am humbled by the opportunity to do so at an agency with a broad scope and impact like HRA, and I look forward to quickly putting Mayor de Blasio's vision into practice. From making sure that our policies and procedures prevent homelessness rather than cause it, to making sure children and adults have access to food assistance and health care, we will work with the front-line staff to ensure that this agency helps lift up all New Yorkers, in every borough," said the

incoming HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, when his appointment was announced earlier this month.

CCC is so pleased and excited that Steve Banks will soon be at the helm at HRA. We think that given his background and leadership, he has the potential to transform HRA into a social service agency that is more available to New Yorkers in need—providing more timely assistance in a less judgmental, less bureaucratic and more compassionate manner that will more successfully put struggling New Yorkers on the path to achieving food and income security.

This will require budget actions and recommendations, such as those that will be addressed in this testimony. But it will also require a culture shift for the agency's 15,000 staff and a significant amount of training. We hope that the new Commissioner will be given the resources and assistance needed to have the staff he needs, trained to meet the needs of the vulnerable New Yorkers seeking assistance at HRA.

CCC is very pleased that the Preliminary Budget proposes to add \$1 million to expand public outreach to increase participation in income and food assistance programs and \$300,000 for a training coordinator to coordinate staff training on policies governing income and food assistance programs. This funding and commitment to outreach and training is critical and we urge the City Council to support these proposals.

A core component of HRA's work is providing temporary cash assistance to struggling New Yorkers living in poverty or trying to cope with low wages. CCC hopes that the new Administration can turn HRA into an agency that ensures eligible New Yorkers from all five boroughs receive the help they need, in a timely fashion, without needless sanctions, through a culturally sensitive and compassionate process. Furthermore, in addition to receiving public assistance and other benefits, these families need to have access to programs that truly prepare them to participate in the workforce and find jobs with career ladders.

The Mayor and the City Council have begun this work with the paid sick leave law signed earlier this week. In addition, CCC is very pleased that in Mayor de Blasio's Preliminary Budget remarks he spoke of his intent to gain permission from Albany to increase the minimum wage in New York City.

Far too many hard-working New Yorkers are living in poverty. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, New York City's overall poverty rate is 21.2 percent, which means that one in every five New Yorkers lives in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Even more sobering, the child poverty rate in New York City grew from 27.1 percent in 2009 to 31.4 in 2012, with over 553,000 children now living in poverty.<sup>2</sup> Many New Yorkers who live in poverty work at minimum wage jobs, and need higher wages in order to support themselves and their families. CCC supports raising the minimum wage to at least \$10.10, as President Obama has done for federal contract workers. Ultimately, we believe every working New Yorker should earn a living wage.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

Ensuring New Yorkers have access to food is another critical role HRA plays in New York City. While there have been many successful initiatives to increase the number of New Yorkers enrolled in the SNAP/Food Stamp program and to increase access to healthy affordable food throughout the City, there is much more work that needs to be done in this area. One in five New York City children lives in a food insecure home, and over 20 percent of New Yorkers – more than 1.8 million people – participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps).

As mentioned previously, we support the proposal to add \$1 million to HRA for public outreach, to expand participation in food programs, such as SNAP and WIC. Ensuring eligible New Yorkers are enrolled in these programs is a win-win, as this federal money helps to both feed families and put more money into the City's local economy.

Former Speaker Quinn had started several initiatives to help food insecure New Yorkers and CCC will be respectfully urging the Administration and the City Council to work together to ensure these are maintained. For example, the former Speaker initiated a program whereby families enrolling in Medicaid were screened for SNAP concurrently.

In addition, while many City Council initiatives have been baselined, several programs that enable New Yorkers to use their SNAP benefits to purchase healthy foods were not. We are particularly concerned that the Preliminary Budget fails to fund farmers' markets and the use of EBT in farmers' markets. Specific items that were not baselined include: \$335,000 for SNAP (food stamps)/EBTs at Farmers' markets; \$61,000 for the expansion of the New Amsterdam Market and \$60,000 to expand low income farmers' markets. We will be urging the Administration to restore and baseline this funding in the Executive Budget and urge the Council to do the same.

We appreciate the Council's historic support of SNAP benefit use at the City's farmers' markets. The number of New Yorkers who make SNAP purchases at farmers' markets grows substantially each year, as a result of the DOHMH Health Bucks program and the repeated Council distribution of one-year funds to support EBT technology at the markets. Given the positive impact the ability to use SNAP at farmers' markets has on the food security of New Yorkers and the local economy, we are also urging the new Administration to ensure all New York City farmers' markets and Green Carts are equipped with EBT technology, and that this funding is baselined in the Executive Budget. We respectfully request the Council to make the same request.

While SNAP benefits are a critical component of ensuring the food security of New Yorkers, there are many hungry New Yorkers who are not eligible, eligible New Yorkers who are not enrolled, and the federal government has cut SNAP benefits. Effective November 1, 2013, SNAP recipients had their benefits decreased due to federal cuts to the SNAP program. Specifically, for example, a household of three has lost approximately \$29 per month – more than 20 meals.<sup>3</sup> Thus, unfortunately, many New Yorkers need to turn to emergency food programs (EFPs), such as food pantries and soup kitchens.

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<sup>3</sup> The Farm Bill that passed in 2014 included even more cuts to SNAP, which would have caused greater food hardship among New Yorkers who participate in the program. However, Governor Cuomo recently announced that

Since the federal SNAP cuts went into effect in November, EFPs have experienced a marked increase in the demand for food. EFPs also saw a substantial growth in visitors preceding the SNAP cuts, as a result of both the recession and Hurricane Sandy. Given these circumstances, EFPs need more funding so that they can attempt to serve the 1.4 million New Yorkers who seek their help.

While we appreciate that \$1.3 million for EFPs was baselined in the November modifications, this funding does not address the new needs EFPs are facing. To meet the increased demand and cost of food, CCC will be urging the Administration to increase funding for EFPs by \$8.1 million (from \$11.7 to \$19.8 million) in the Executive Budget. We respectfully request the Council make the same request.

Finally, we hope that as the new Administration and new Commissioner work to enhance the work HRA does to help vulnerable New Yorkers that they will also take steps to be more transparent and enhance the data that is available to the public.

### **Department of Homeless Services (DHS)**

Today's budget hearing comes at a historic time for DHS. On one hand, we are in the midst of a crisis, with an unprecedented number of New Yorkers living in shelter for increasingly longer periods of time. And on the other hand, we are at a time of much hope, with a new Commissioner and Mayor dedicated to preventing homelessness, better helping the homeless, and expanding affordable housing. In just a few short months, the new DHS Commissioner, Gilbert Taylor, has begun to make progress in improving the conditions of shelters, moving children out of two unsafe shelters, and working with Albany to create a new rental assistance program. That said, there is much work that needs to be done as quickly as possible.

Homelessness has indeed reached unprecedented levels in New York City, with more children living in shelters than ever before. As of March 18, 2014, there were 10,784 families living in the DHS shelter system, including 22,488 children.<sup>4</sup> This is compared to March 2013 when there were 20,480<sup>5</sup> children living in shelter and 16,506<sup>6</sup> in March 2012. This is a 36% increase in just 2 years.

Additionally, families with children are living in shelters for increasingly longer periods of time: the average length of stay for families was 337 days in Fiscal Year 2012, compared to 375 days in Fiscal Year 2013.<sup>7</sup> As of December 2013, the average length of stay for families with children

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he is devoting state funding to make up for these benefit losses that New York State SNAP recipients would have experienced.

<sup>4</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, Daily Report, March 19, 2014. Available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services Local Law 37 Report. Available at: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/nycstat/downloads/pdf/l137\\_report\\_02\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/nycstat/downloads/pdf/l137_report_02_2014.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> New York City Mayor's Management Report, Department of Homeless Services. Available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr2013/dhs.pdf>.

in DHS shelters was 429 days.<sup>8</sup> The average length of stay in NYC homeless shelters has increased 66% since the elimination of the Advantage subsidy program- from 258 days in April 2011 to 429 days as of December 2013.<sup>9</sup> According to the New York City's Independent Budget Office's February 2014 report, without a replacement for the Advantage program, this trend is likely to continue.<sup>10</sup>

Homelessness creates risks to the physical and emotional well-being and educational success of children. For example, children experiencing homelessness have an increased risk of illness compared to children who are not homeless: they suffer from four times as many respiratory infections, five times as many gastrointestinal infections, and twice as many ear infections.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, they are four times as likely to suffer from asthma and have high rates of asthma-related hospitalizations.<sup>12</sup>

Being homeless has also been demonstrated to be harmful to children's emotional well-being. Homelessness causes traumatic disruptions in the lives of children, who, in addition to losing their homes, experience loss of their friends and community, sense of security, routines, possessions, and privacy.<sup>13</sup> Homelessness also makes families more vulnerable to other forms of trauma, such as witnessing violence, physical or sexual assault, and abrupt separation from family members.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the impact of homelessness on a child's education can be devastating, because it often causes disruptions affecting their attendance and academic performance. Nationally, only 77 percent of homeless children attend school regularly.<sup>15</sup> While the attendance rate for children in New York City shelters is higher, at 83.6 percent,<sup>16</sup> this is still insufficient to meet the Department of Education's 90 percent attendance requirement for promotion.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade compared to non-homeless children.<sup>18</sup> Homeless children also have low rates of preschool enrollment, with fewer than 16 percent of eligible preschool-aged homeless children enrolled in preschool nationally.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, Local Law 37 Report, *supra*, note 2.

<sup>9</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, Local Law 37 Report. Available at: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/nycstat/downloads/pdf/l137\\_report\\_02\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/nycstat/downloads/pdf/l137_report_02_2014.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> New York City Independent Budget Office, Focus on the Preliminary Budget, February 2014. Available at: <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2014marchfopb2.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The National Center on Family Homeless, The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness, Dec. 2011. Available at: <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/306.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children, 2005, at page 2. Available at:

[http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn\\_assets/pdfs/promising\\_practices/Facts\\_on\\_Trauma\\_and\\_Homeless\\_Children.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/promising_practices/Facts_on_Trauma_and_Homeless_Children.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Sept. 2009, at page 1. Available at: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/education.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> New York City Mayor's Management Report, Department of Homeless Services, *supra*, note 4.

<sup>17</sup> New York City Department of Education, Regulation of the Chancellor. Available at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/DB08E4BD-DE50-4D96-87FF-9260B3C1AB4D/0/A501.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children, *supra*, note 9.

<sup>19</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, Education of Homeless Children and Youth, *supra*, note 12.

CCC is grateful for the Administration's commitment to changing this. The key components to addressing this crisis will need to center around preventing homelessness; caring for the homeless in a shelter system that is safe, clean and service-rich; helping the homeless leave shelter to permanent housing through the creation of a rental assistance program; expanding affordable housing and supportive housing; enabling homeless families to have access to Section 8 and NYCHA facilities; and ensuring supports and services are available when families leave the shelter system.

The best way to reduce the number of families in the shelter system, and eliminate the trauma homelessness causes children, is to prevent families from becoming homeless in the first place. Current preventive services in New York City include DHS's HomeBase program, the FEPS rent subsidy for public assistance recipients, HRA One-Shot deals, civil legal services and other innovative community-based programs at non-profits throughout the City. CCC believes funding for these current homelessness prevention programs, as well as new ones developed by the de Blasio administration, will help reduce the homeless population.

CCC urges the Administration and the City Council to support these essential, cost-effective programs with sufficient funding in the City's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2015, as well as advocating for additional State and Federal funding. This will require restoring and baselining several City Council initiatives that were not included with those baselined in November or proposed to be baselined in the Preliminary Budget. Specifically these are: \$500,000 for the Citywide task force on housing court, \$415,000 for community consultants (HPD), \$2 million for anti-eviction services, \$250,000 for the Citywide homeless prevention fund, \$750,000 for the Mortgage foreclosure program and \$100,000 for the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development.

Unfortunately, not all homelessness can be prevented. For these families, it is incumbent upon the City to ensure safe, clean and appropriate shelter conditions. CCC is pleased that the Administration has decided to transfer the 400 children and their families from the Auburn Family Shelter in Fort Greene and the Catherine Street Shelter in lower Manhattan to other shelters and/or assist them in obtaining permanent housing. Both of these shelters have been plagued by violations making the facilities unsafe for children. CCC is pleased that the Mayor and his Administration agree that these shelters are not appropriate for children and we commend him not only for recognizing this problem, but also for acting on it in order to protect and improve the lives of New York City's homeless children.

Additionally, the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 proposes \$1.3 million to improve security and programming at the Auburn Family Shelter and the Catherine Street Shelter. CCC would like to thank the Mayor for his dedication to improving these shelters and we urge the Council to support this funding, which will improve the conditions for the homeless individuals who reside at these shelters.

While we are grateful that the Administration has recognized the poor conditions in two of the City's shelters for children and families, more needs to be done to ensure that all homeless children are provided safe, decent shelter accommodations and that their basic needs are met. While Auburn and Catherine Street are likely the most egregious, we hope that this is the



beginning of DHS's review of conditions at all of its Tier 2 shelters, as well as the cluster sites, and that additional closures, renovations and resources will be sought for other facilities unsafe for children.

Therefore, CCC recommends that in order to get a better understanding of shelter conditions throughout the City, DHS should do a full review of all shelters for children and their families—both Tier 2 and cluster sites and then make the findings publicly available. Additionally, CCC urges the Administration to include resources to not only examine current conditions in shelters, but also to address additional concerns if they exist in the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2015.

In addition to shelters being safe for children and families, we believe that the best way to help homeless families is to also ensure they receive necessary services on-site, such as health and mental health services, child abuse and neglect prevention services, domestic violence counseling, STD prevention services, and employment training services. For example, several years ago, DHS cut employment specialists and recreational specialists, which has had a negative impact on family shelters. In addition, there are currently only 17 on-site health clinics left at the over 200 family shelters. We hope the Council and the Administration can work together to ensure these types of on-site services return to the shelter system so that they are readily available to these families in crisis.

Helping homeless families includes helping families obtain permanent housing. This will include expanding affordable housing, as well as making Section 8 and NYCHA housing available to homeless families. Furthermore, the end of the Advantage program has shown us that many families need a rental subsidy to be able to transition to permanent housing. While a housing subsidy is not the solution for every homeless family, it needs to be in the City's toolkit for those families who cannot secure permanent housing without rental assistance. It is critical that the program be robust enough in scale and scope to effectively combat the homelessness crisis and help families prepare, transition, and connect to long-term independence.

Housing subsidies have proven to be an effective way to enable homeless families to move out of shelter and into affordable housing and is well-past time that we provide this aid to homeless New York City families. According to the report by the coalition, United to End Homelessness (which CCC is a member of), in 2010, 9,864 families exited the shelter system to permanent housing and 7,678 exited with an Advantage subsidy.<sup>20</sup> This is compared to the first year after the Advantage program ended when only 4,930 families exited shelter into permanent housing and zero families had a city rental subsidy.<sup>21</sup> Without the creation of a new rental assistance program, families will continue living in shelters for increasing periods of time without an available affordable housing option to move into.

CCC thanks the Council for its support of a resolution in support of a new rental assistance program and we were very excited to hear the Mayor speak at his Preliminary Budget Address about working with Governor Cuomo to create a new homelessness prevention pilot, which

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<sup>20</sup> United to End Homelessness, A Roadmap to Ending Homelessness, September 2013. Available at: <http://endhomelessnessnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A-Roadmap-to-End-Homelessness.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

would include eviction-prevention services and rental assistance. We are looking forward to hearing more details about the plan and hopeful that a rental subsidy program will be part of the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2015. CCC is grateful that the City recognizes the need for a new rental assistance subsidy, and we are in full support of implementing a new program to help families and children secure housing.

Finally, we hope that as the new Administration and new Commissioner work to enhance the work DHS does to help homeless children and families, that they will also take steps to be more transparent and enhance the data that is available to the public.

### **Administration for Children's Services- Early Childhood Education**

Historically, for more years that I can bear to count, testifying at the City Council General Welfare/Women's Issues Preliminary Budget hearing has meant pleading with the Administration and the City Council to restore millions of dollars and thousands of slots for child care. It is therefore refreshing to be testifying today about how we will incorporate almost \$63 million in baselined funding as well as expand full-day UPK to every 4-year old. The significance of this cannot be over-stated. CCC is incredibly grateful to the Administration for its commitment to early childhood education. We eagerly look forward to working together with the Administration and the Council to implement the City's *Ready to Launch* plan to expand full-day pre-k to every four-year-old.

After many years of budget cuts and the disruption caused by the EarlyLearn RFP, the expansion of full day pre-k gives us an opportunity to stabilize and strengthen ACS's subsidized child care and Head Start system. We must seize this opportunity in a manner that ensures ACS no longer carries a structural budget deficit, expands early childhood access for children 0-3, improves the quality of the programming available for all young children, compensates and supports the workforce appropriately, and ensures programs are fiscally solvent and able to thrive.

While the Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget does not have any cuts to the child care system, ACS still has a structural deficit in its child care budget. We believe that stabilizing the child care system requires the Administration to permanently resolve ACS's structural deficit and ensure providers and their staff are adequately compensated. This will likely require funding to be added to ACS's budget in the Executive Budget.

For years, we have seen that ACS's child care budget is unable to sustain both its contracted system and the increasingly costly voucher system. Typically, the voucher system is for the "mandated" population, meaning families on or transitioning off of public assistance, for whom federal law requires they receive child care. Families use the vouchers for center-based care, family child care or informal family, friend or neighbor care. While families can choose to enroll their children in the EarlyLearn system rather than use a voucher, they often choose vouchers—perhaps due to their choice about the setting of their care, because of the limited time they have to secure care and move forward with their public assistance case, or because HRA and ACS need to work on a better system to ensure these families know where EarlyLearn vacancies are located.

ACS historically reduced their voucher expenses by eliminating priority codes for vouchers, such as those for special needs children or parents and other populations not mandated to receive care. When the costs associated with the mandated system (i.e. the vouchers) increased and the other priorities eliminated, ACS also handled the squeeze by cutting (or proposing to cut) the non-mandated portion of their system, which is now the system of contracted care. Recently, it has meant reducing the size of the EarlyLearn system. The children in the contracted system typically come from low-income working families—exactly the families we would want to have child care so they can remain in the workforce.

CCC believes that this issue should be resolved by ensuring ACS is funded to meet the fiscal obligations of its voucher system. Other services that are mandatory to provide to those who are eligible, result in budget re-estimates for the agency mandated to provide the service. For example, when the shelter system increases or decreases, there is a budget re-estimate for DHS. The same happens for HRA with regard to public assistance and for ACS with foster care. Since child care for those on or transitioning off of public assistance is also a mandated service, OMB should be conducting budget re-estimates that fund ACS for the number and type (i.e. cost) of mandated vouchers they are providing. This would go a long way towards resolving ACS's structural deficit. We will be urging the Administration to do this in the Executive Budget and would welcome the support of the City Council.

Another important issue that must be addressed before the Executive Budget is how the City will handle the millions of dollars that have been baselined for initiatives and programs originally chosen by the City Council and funded with one-year discretionary funds. Notably, there is \$63 million of funding baselined in ACS's budget that is currently funding thousands of center-based and family child care network slots and school-aged child care vouchers. The contracts for all of these programs end on June 30, 2014. With the money baselined, but not the programs, there is currently no mechanism in place to maintain the service beyond June 30, 2014. CCC recommends that the City extend all of the contracts for programs previously funded by the Council for one year. This would give the new administration time for a procurement process, such as a negotiated acquisition for all of these services/initiatives, including child care. In the interim, extending the contracts for one year would ensure continuity for families, providers and communities.

Furthermore, extending the contracts for one year would enable the discretionary/baselined programs to get on the same contracting cycle as EarlyLearn contracted providers. Ultimately, it is critical that agencies do not have separate systems—their system and a Council system. This will also require adjusting the rate for the programs that were previously funded by the City Council.

We believe that addressing the contracts for the discretionary programs and implementing UPK for all 4-year olds will also give ACS the opportunity to make much-needed improvements to EarlyLearn. Notably, providers have long-stated that the EarlyLearn rate is insufficient and about 50% of their staff are no longer on health insurance plans. These issues must be resolved.

Finally, the influx of thousands of full-day UPK slots and the \$330 million for 4-year olds must be used to strengthen the ACS system, and not create more instability for programs. . Regardless of whether ACS programs have UPK contracts with ACS or DOE, it is critical that:

- a) Providers continue to serve 0-3 year olds and no capacity for younger children is lost by providers converting 0-3 slots into 4 year-old UPK slots;
- b) 4-year olds from the ACS system have child care/wrap-around from 3-6 pm so that their parents can work;
- c) 4-year olds from the ACS system are able to receive full day (8-10 hours) child care during the summer so that parents can work;
- d) This opportunity is used to age down the child care system to serve more 0-3 year olds in high quality programs that are adequately funded and have well-compensated staff; and
- e) Head Start funding and programs are well-utilized.

As you can see, the influx of funding for full day (6.2 hours) UPK for four-year olds creates tremendous opportunities to strengthen and stabilize the system, but must be done right to ensure the child care system thrives.

Furthermore, to be able to ensure implementation is carried out effectively and to monitor the system, ACS must be able to capture and report on numerous data elements, including their EarlyLearn capacity (which we know has been reduced over time), their enrollment, their vacancies, the ages and settings of children receiving care, as well as information about the vouchers (how many, where they are using them, etc.), and Head Start. There is currently very limited data publicly available.

As a member of the Campaign for Children, our vision is for every New York City child to have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education in their community. CCC looks forward to being a partner with the Administration, the City Council, ACS, DOE, our colleagues in the Campaign for Children, and others to ensure a successful implementation of the City's UPK plan and to stabilize and strengthen ACS's child care system.

### **Administration for Children's Services- Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice**

The children and families of New York City are fortunate to have a Mayor who cares so deeply about children touched by the child welfare system, as well as a new Commissioner who could not be any more well-versed in child welfare and juvenile justice issues. In addition, both systems have made tremendous progress over the past decade—significantly decreasing the number of children in foster care (now to under 12,000), decreasing the number of children in detention (currently 223), decreasing the number of children placed in facilities post-disposition, and increasing the number of children receiving the preventive services that keep them out of foster care and the juvenile justice system.

While there has been much progress, there are still challenges. Child welfare still faces the challenge of ensuring that child protective services is able to identify which children are at the most risk and need to be in foster care, which children are safe in their homes, and which families need services to allay the risks to children. This is no easy feat. In addition, children in

New York City still face very long lengths of stay in foster care and too many youth age out of the system with no family and poor outcomes.

CCC appreciates the attention currently being paid to court ordered supervision cases. We have often expressed our concerns that these are the highest risk cases—cases where court-intervention is warranted, the children remain in the home, and the family is often referred to services by a child protective worker rather than a preventive service program. Furthermore, the services in these cases are no longer voluntary, significantly changing the dynamic and the model for prevention.

CCC also appreciates that the new Commissioner is re-examining Child Success NYC. To date, limited information has been publicly available about the new model and the plans and we hope that the new administration will partner with advocates and providers when implementing a model aimed at improving foster care services. We do strongly believe in the federal waiver and the ability for the City to use its federal funding more flexibly, particularly for reducing foster care caseloads.

We also believe that the transition creates the opportunity for ACS to take a close look at where its services are and where they need to be. For example, while we have been supportive of the creation of evidence-based program models, they have been placed in communities where providers were interested in starting a program. Now that we have piloted numerous programs, it would be valuable to assess their effectiveness and then ensure there is a match between community needs and available programs.

Similarly, we think it would be valuable for ACS to focus on prevention in a manner that addresses risk before there needs to be a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. For example, ACS could look at its data and see what homeless shelters, NYCHA facilities, schools, etc. have generated a lot of reports and target preventive services to those locations. Perhaps partnerships could be forged between preventive programs and these types of sites.

With regard to juvenile justice, we appreciate the new administration taking a close look at both detention facilities and Close to Home facilities to ensure they are providing high-quality, safe and therapeutic care. While we understand that this will take time, we hope that the delay of transferring limited secure will not be too protracted. While we want to ensure this is implemented well, we also believe that the juvenile justice placement system will be easier for ACS to administer when it has both non-secure and limited secure placement facilities. This is because it will be easier to move children between the two types of facilities when warranted. In addition, we do not want judicial decisions to be based on where the facility is (upstate or NYC) rather than whether the child needs a non-secure versus a limited secure placement.

There is clearly much work that needs to be done to strengthen the child welfare and juvenile justice systems for the City's most vulnerable children. We hope that as the new Commissioner assess her needs, new resources can be added in the Executive Budget.

CCC looks forward to being a partner with the Administration, ACS, the City Council and our colleagues in this endeavor. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

### Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committees on General Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Women's Issues

#### Re: Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget

**Advocates for Children of New York**  
**March 24, 2014**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the impact of the Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget on early learning programs. My name is Randi Levine, and I am an attorney and Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 40 years, Advocates for Children has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. We are also a proud member of the Campaign for Children.

By the time children enter kindergarten, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds lag significantly behind children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in academic skills. High-quality early childhood education programs are proven to help fill this gap. Rigorous research found that, compared to children left out of the early childhood program, low-income children who participated in Chicago's Child-Parent Centers were 40 percent less likely to be retained a grade in school, 35 percent less likely to need special education services, 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school, 31 percent more likely to hold a semi-skilled or higher level job, and 41 percent less likely to be arrested for a violent crime. Studies of other high-quality early childhood programs have found similar outcomes, resulting in substantial cost savings to schools, cities, and taxpayers.

For the past several years, we have been at City Hall pleading with the City not to cut the number of children receiving early childhood education programs. We are deeply grateful that the Administration and City Council have changed the conversation to focus on how to expand and strengthen early childhood education in New York City. We strongly support New York City's plan to ensure that all four-year-old children can attend a full-day, high-quality Universal Pre-K program. As we move toward this goal, we must not lose sight of the important work that remains in order to realize the vision of EarlyLearn.

First, we want to make sure that the City's focus on expanding early childhood programs does not end when every four-year-old child gets access to Universal Pre-K. Advocates for Children often gets calls from low-income parents looking for preschool settings for their three-year-old children, and we know that the benefits of

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early childhood education increase when children participate in two-year programs. We are concerned about the reduction in capacity of the contracted child care system described in a recent IBO report. As the City works to expand Universal Pre-K for four-year-old children, we urge you to work with the Administration to expand early childhood education programs for zero-to-three-year-old children as well.

Second, while we are very pleased that funding for child care centers was baselined in this year's budget, we are concerned about the future of the centers that were funded previously through the one-year City Council discretionary funding. We want to ensure that there is a plan to allow young children attending high-quality child care centers to continue attending those centers in July as long as those centers have a plan to meet the EarlyLearn standards.

Third, we continue to be concerned that the EarlyLearn rate is insufficient to support the high-quality standards that the program requires, as well as the compensation and health insurance plans necessary to attract and retain qualified teachers. To meet the promise of EarlyLearn's vision for comprehensive, high-quality programs, it must receive adequate funding.

The EarlyLearn rate must be adequate to serve all eligible preschoolers, including preschoolers with disabilities, English Language Learners, preschoolers in foster care, and preschoolers living in temporary housing. At Advocates for Children, we receive calls from parents whose preschoolers are not receiving their mandated preschool special education services at EarlyLearn programs, and the programs do not seem to have the capacity to resolve the problem and get services in place. We also receive calls from parents whose preschoolers have been discharged illegally from EarlyLearn programs with the explanation that the programs do not have the capacity to serve students with behavioral needs or other special needs. Discharging preschoolers throws families into crisis, placing parents at risk of losing their jobs and children at risk of experiencing school push-out before they ever enter kindergarten. A recent U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights study found that, even as early as preschool, black students face harsher discipline than other students. We must ensure that the school-to-prison pipeline does not begin in our EarlyLearn centers. The EarlyLearn rate must be adequate not only to serve the average preschool student, but also to serve preschoolers who need additional support in order to succeed in the classroom and prepare for kindergarten.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Testimony Prepared by  
Sally Greenspan**

**for the General Welfare Committee  
Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget  
And the Fiscal Year 2014 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report-  
Department of Homeless Services**

**Monday 3/24/14**

**on behalf of  
Enterprise Community Partners**





Good afternoon and thank you to Chairperson Levin and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to testify on the Department of Homeless Services Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget.

My name is Sally Greenspan, and I am the Program Director for Vulnerable Populations at Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., where we understand that our city's homelessness crisis is caused largely by a shortage of housing that is affordable to the lowest-income New Yorkers. At Enterprise we work to create and preserve affordable housing connected to opportunity for low-income individuals and families. Since 1987, we have created 44,000 affordable homes in New York, nearly a quarter of which have been set aside for vulnerable populations.

The Department of Homeless Services continues to face urgent levels of demand for emergency shelter and related services, and must respond to this need while also developing paths out of homelessness for its clients. The Department's Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget highlights a number of areas where continued and enhanced funding will be essential to ensure that homelessness is a brief and unusual occurrence, and that all low income households in New York City have a quality place to call home.

**First, the City must invest - in partnership with the State - in a new local rent subsidy that is large and flexible enough to serve the majority of families experiencing or at high risk of homelessness.** As stated in the Preliminary Budget, the absence of a rental subsidy program targeted to homeless households has had a dramatic negative impact on both the number and length of stay of those in emergency shelter. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness - unquestionably, some households with permanent disabilities, fixed incomes, or high service needs will require a permanent housing voucher or supportive housing. However, the majority of households in shelter face primarily economic barriers to housing, and national best practices demonstrate they can be helped with shorter term rental assistance coupled with services.

A new local rent subsidy program must be developed in cooperation between public and non-governmental partners. It must be large enough to adequately address the pronounced need, and flexible enough in enrollment criteria to allow numerous households to access it. It should include a service component to connect families to community resources. In order to ensure the greatest possible success for participants, it should be calibrated to family's needs both in terms of amount and duration, and include features to ensure that families that are not able to be

successful after the conclusion of the subsidy are transitioned to other programs and resources.

In order to fund an effective rent subsidy, the City must secure the State's financial support and associated Federal matching funds. The first step in doing so will be to remove the prohibitive language in the State budget contained in the Article VII Aid to Local Governments bill, as identified in the Department's Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget. The City, together with their non-governmental partners, must work actively in the coming days both to secure this change in State budget language and to ensure robust funding for an essential rental assistance program in New York City.

**Secondly, New York City and the Department of Homeless Services must increase investment in proven homelessness prevention tools to stop homelessness before it starts.**

New York City is a national leader in developing research-based best practices to ensure that households in danger of losing their housing and falling into homelessness receive targeted, effective services to keep them stable in their communities. The City's internationally recognized HomeBase program provides services and financial assistance to families deemed at imminent risk of homelessness, as described in the Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget. A recent rigorous academic evaluation of the HomeBase program found that it cut shelter applications almost in half and reduced the number of days that participating families spent in shelter by 70 percent, generating savings of more than \$1.25 for every City tax levy dollar invested through the program. Most importantly, HomeBase and other prevention and eviction prevention programs throughout the City are essential tools to ensure that families never need to experience the trauma of homelessness, avoiding not only public cost, but incalculable tolls on their families and especially their children. Since prevention services like HomeBase are proven to help families and save public funds, increasing the prevention budget for the Department of Homeless Services is a smart investment.

**Lastly, City agencies, including the Department of Homeless Services as well as the housing and welfare agencies, must work together to increase the supply of affordable housing for homeless and extremely low-income families.** New York City has always been a leader in the creation of affordable housing, but supply has not kept up with demand, especially at the lowest income levels. The new Administration has already made admirable statements about the intent to create housing opportunities for those of extremely low income, but there is much work to do. The Department of Homeless Services must continue to invest staff and development resources to working with its City agency partners to ensure that new housing units are created - and existing units are better used - to serve homeless and at-risk of homelessness New Yorkers. One promising model is to cross subsidize very low income units with middle and upper income units, which not only creates housing at lower price points, but also promotes economic diversity. Furthermore, the Department should continue to investigate ways in which the existing funding streams that pay for emergency shelter and related expenses can be re-allocated to fund permanent housing for those in need. By creating an interagency council and working

with the City's development partners, we can find ways to add to the supply of housing affordable to the lowest income New Yorkers.

Ending homelessness in New York City will require cooperation between the City and the State, between public and private partners, and between the homelessness and housing sectors. We commend the City and the new Administration on the hard work they do every day to house homeless families and individuals in emergency shelter, and to devise new ways of ensuring that homelessness is avoided and ended wherever possible. Enterprise looks forward to continuing to work with our partners to make sure that permanent affordable housing solutions are devoted to this important work to end homelessness.



## **Testimony for the New York City Council General Welfare Committee FY15 Preliminary Budget Hearing | March 24, 2014**

**Submitted by:** Alyssa Aguilera, Political Director, VOCAL-NY. Contact: [alyssa@vocal-ny.org](mailto:alyssa@vocal-ny.org) and (917) 200-1446.

Good afternoon. My name is Alyssa Aguilera and I am the Political Director at Voices Of Community Activists & Leaders (VOCAL-NY). VOCAL-NY is a grassroots organization working to create healthy and just communities in New York by building power among low-income people affected by HIV/AIDS, mass incarceration and the drug war. In addition to our community organizing work, we coordinate a network of human services agencies that provide housing assistance for people living with HIV/AIDS called the *NYC HIV/AIDS Housing Advocacy Network*.

On behalf of VOCAL-NY, I want to thank General Welfare Committee Chair Stephen Levin and the other members of this committee for the opportunity today to provide testimony today.

My testimony today will focus on how HRA and the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) can insure all homeless and low-income people living with HIV have safe, decent and affordable housing. HASA, formerly known as the Division of AIDS Services and codified in local law in 1997, is a division within HRA. HASA restricts medical eligibility to homeless and low-income people who have either AIDS, as defined by the CDC, or "clinical/symptomatic HIV illness," as defined by the NYS Department of Health (DOH) AIDS Institute. HASA provides access to "medically appropriate transitional and permanent housing," including such as "housing subsidies, including, but not limited to, enhanced rental assistance."

The agency now provides some form of housing assistance to more than 32,000 extremely low-income people living with HIV/AIDS, plus nearly 13,000 dependents (mostly children) whose parents qualify. Practically none of these individuals would be able to obtain private market housing if they relied solely on Social Security or public assistance income, given prevailing market rate rents in NYC and the extremely low rate of housing vacancies.

There is much to do to repair the damage done by the Bloomberg' administration policies at HASA, which a 20 percent rise in HASA's emergency housing occupancy during the past year is one of many symptoms of. Fortunately, Mayor de Blasio is already taking bold steps to strengthen HASA, which is an agency that has been central to many New York City's successes in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Personnel is policy, so we are also thrilled that the mayor appointed Lilliam Barrios-Paoli as the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Steve Banks as the new Commissioner for the Human Resources Administration, two of our city's leading advocates for reducing inequality and ensuring basic dignity for all New Yorkers.

## **"30% Rent Cap" Affordable Housing Protection for Clients of HASA's Rental Assistance Program**

Mayor de Blasio demonstrated extraordinary leadership and fulfilled an important campaign promise by negotiating an agreement with Governor Cuomo to close a loophole in HASA's rental assistance program that has resulted in high rates of recurring homelessness, arrears and drove up occupancy rates in HASA-funded emergency housing programs. (We are now encouraging the legislature to approve the proposal in the state FY14-15 budget due on April 1.) Until now, HASA clients with federal disability income or Veteran's benefits have been forced to pay upwards of 70 percent or more of their disability income towards their rent, even though they were enrolled in a rental assistance program. This forced trade-off's between essential needs, including food and medical co-pays, in order to pay the rent and forced many back into the shelter system.

The proposed "30 percent rent cap" affordable housing protection will align HASA's rental assistance program with all other low-income housing programs in New York, including Section 8, public housing and supportive housing. Most importantly, it will prevent homelessness for over 10,000 low-income New Yorkers who have been permanently disabled by HIV/AIDS, and enable hundreds more to move out of emergency housing. Moreover, many HASA clients in supportive housing will now be able to move into more independent living without fear of their rent doubling, freeing up those units up for clients most in need.

### ***We recommend the following for City Council:***

- **Approve Mayor de Blasio's preliminary budget proposal of \$4.3 million in FY14 and \$17.4 FY15 to implement the affordable housing protection for HASA clients.**

### ***We recommend the following for HRA/HASA:***

- **Establish eligibility for the affordable housing protection so that it covers all HASA clients who receive federal disability income and/or earned income up to *at least* 200% of the federal poverty line.**
- **Implement the affordable housing protection as quickly as possible, and make it retroactive to April 1, 2014 (which the mayor and governor's budget proposals include adequate funding for).**
- **Implement a moratorium on evictions by approving all one-shot rent and utilities requests from HASA clients currently experience a severe rent burden. The rent cap will prevent most of those clients from falling into arrears again in the future. Further, HASA is already experiencing a crisis related to rising emergency housing occupancy**

and cannot afford to worsen the situation by adding to the number of homeless HASA clients.

## HASA Rental Assistance

There are several additional barriers that homeless HASA clients face in trying to obtain permanent housing: the reduction in broker's fee payments, policy limiting new apartment placements to studios, and unrealistic rent payment guidelines. More than eight in ten HASA clients rely on rental assistance for their housing.

A long-standing barrier to permanent housing has been HASA's extremely low rental assistance levels, which has not been updated since 2003 and is now about 25 percent below the Fair Market Rent for New York City, which is what Section 8 and other tenant-based rental assistance programs rely on for rental subsidies. HASA's practice of providing rent payments twice per month frustrates landlords as well.

Furthermore, policy changes enacted under the previous administration exacerbated already widespread discrimination by brokers and landlords against homeless people living with HIV/AIDS who rely on HASA's rental assistance program.

Beginning in March 2011, HRA cut broker's fee payments for clients seeking apartments (including those enrolled in HASA) by 50 percent, so that the agency will now only approve payments up to than half the cost of first month's rent. The \$4.793 million PEG included the cut for broker's fee payments for all HRA clients, not just those in HASA. In a survey of 44 different community-based organizations by Shubert Botein Policy Associates shortly after the policy went into effect, half of the case managers surveyed reported that the new broker's fee policy prevented a housing placement for one or more HASA clients. Survey respondents also said that realtors were asking clients to pay the other half of the broker's fee payment out of their pockets, leading some clients to engage in risky activities in order to obtain the money. Mayor Bloomberg first introduced this PEG as midyear cut in the FY 11 budget and City Council did not make a restoration in the FY12, FY13 or FY14 budgets.

Around the same time as the broker's fee payment policy change went into effect, HASA also began replacing security deposits for landlords with vouchers that can only be redeemed through a cumbersome process, again frustrating brokers and landlords.

Last year, HASA introduced a new policy of limiting new housing placements to studio apartments unless the agency believes that medical need or family size requires a larger apartment. One reason advocates are concerned with this policy is the limited availability of vacant and affordable studio apartments, which could mean homeless people living with HIV/AIDS experience longer delays in obtaining a permanent housing placement. Moreover, clients are reporting that HASA is denying requests for one-bedrooms even when they fall within the same cost range of studio apartments, underscoring the fundamentally punitive

nature of this policy.

All of these policies combine to make it extremely difficult for HASA clients to obtain housing through the rental assistance program on a timely basis, despite formal legal protections barring “source of income” discrimination against tenants.

One of the problems with delaying the time it takes to find an apartment is increased spending on emergency housing, not to mention adverse health effects that could be avoided with shorter shelter stays.

***We recommend the following for City Council and HRA/HASA:***

- **Restore funding for HASA broker’s fee payments equivalent to one month’s rent for homeless people living with HIV/AIDS seeking private market apartments through the rental assistance program.**
- **Rescind HASA’s policy limiting apartment placements to studio apartments, a punitive policy that increases the burden on homeless clients to find an apartment in a timely manner.**
- **Update HASA’s rent payment standards to 110 percent of HUD’s Fair Market Rent (FMR) guidelines, the standard for Section 8 in NYC.**

### **HASA Supportive Housing**

Until recently, Mayor Bloomberg eliminated \$5.1 million in annual funding for HASA-contracted supportive housing programs serving homeless people living with HIV/AIDS who have co-occurring mental health and/or substance use issues, although City Council has made annual restorations since FY10 when Bloomberg first targeted these programs for cuts. The budget cut affects onsite case management and basic operations in over 4,600 supportive housing units, despite the evidence that supportive housing reduces avoidable healthcare, emergency shelter and other public costs. In November 2013, Bloomberg unexpectedly restored funding for HASA-contracted supportive housing in the executive “baseline” budget.

We are pleased that Mayor de Blasio’s preliminary budget proposal baselines funding for these essential programs.

Supportive housing improves health outcomes, prevents early death and prevents new HIV infections. People living with HIV/AIDS who are homeless or unstably housed are less likely to remain connected to healthcare and adhere to treatment. It’s no surprise then that homeless people living with HIV/AIDS have lower CD4 counts, which indicates a weaker immune system, and higher HIV viral load, which indicates poor management of HIV disease

and increases the risk for HIV transmission. Supportive housing helps reduce HIV risk behaviors such as unprotected sex or needle sharing, which also help prevent new HIV infections.

Contrary to common assumptions, whether a person living with HIV/AIDS is stably housed is a better predictor of their connection to healthcare and outcomes than their drug use, mental health status or other individual characteristics like race and ethnicity. In New York City, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among people who are homeless is sixteen times the rate in the general population, and death rates due to HIV/AIDS are five to seven times higher among people who are homeless.

***We recommend the following for City Council:***

- **Support Mayor de Blasio's preliminary budget proposal base-lining \$5.1 million annually for HASA-contracted supportive housing programs.**

### **Emergency Housing for HASA Clients**

Homeless people living with HIV/AIDS in New York City have a legal right to "medically-appropriate" emergency and permanent housing assistance. HASA's emergency housing system, while separate from the Department of Homeless Services' (DHS) shelter system, still presents an unhealthy environment for people with compromised immune systems and often other co-occurring health issues.

Roughly half of emergency housing units are provided through contracts with non-profit transitional housing programs with onsite case management, while the other half are provided through commercial Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels with MOU agreements.

Commercial SROs in particular have drawn safety concerns because of how the landlords tend to cut corners. In one tragic example, there was a murder at an Upper West Side commercial SRO in 2012 when one resident stabbed another resident who was being paid under the table to work as a security guard in the facility.

The New York City Comptroller and City Council have recommended in the past that HASA enter into contracts for the provision of emergency housing services (in contrast with the practice of MOU agreements with commercial SRO operators).

***We recommend the following for HRA/HASA:***

- **Dramatically reduce the use of commercial SROs for emergency shelter for homeless people living with HIV/AIDS. The vast majority of emergency shelter units should be provided solely through contract-based transitional housing providers with onsite staff who can help clients obtain permanent housing.**



## **Expanding HASA Housing Assistance to All Homeless People With HIV By Revising Medical Eligibility Criteria (aka “HASA for All”)**

Another area we want to highlight is the need to revise medical eligibility for HASA. On World AIDS Day in 2011, DOHMH issued new guidance to healthcare providers recommending that they offer antiretroviral therapy to all people living with HIV regardless of their CD4 count. According to the guidance, “The recommendation is based on evidence that ART can improve the health of people living with HIV and that ART can prevent transmission of HIV from an HIV-infected person to an uninfected sexual partner.” This mirrors federal guidelines for when people with HIV should begin treatment.

But here’s the problem. HASA medical eligibility limits housing and other essential services to people with an AIDS diagnosis or “symptomatic HIV,” an obsolete criteria that creates a perverse incentive for homeless people living with HIV to forgo treatment until they get sick enough to qualify for HASA.

*We recommend the following for City Council and the de Blasio administration:*

- **City Council should work with Mayor de Blasio to update HASA’s medical eligibility criteria to include all homeless and low-income people living with HIV, which will align it with DOHMH’s treatment guidelines and the reality of the epidemic today.**

## **Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA)**

Although most housing services for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS are provided through the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), a division of HRA, DOHMH also plays an important role.

Here’s the bad news. New York City is likely to receive deep cuts to our federal Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) grant, which is administered locally by DOHMH. If federal HOPWA cuts are imposed on New York City, we urge Mayor de Blasio to replace it with CTL and state match funding in order to preserve vital housing units for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Compared with New York City’s FY13 funding levels for HOPWA (53,533,071), the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is planning a 10 percent cut in FY2014 (48,441,549) and projecting a 19 percent cut in FY2015 (43,499,044) under a revised formula.

New York City’s HOPWA grant is shared between DOHMH and HRA/HASA.

Nearly 60% of NYC’s HOPWA allocation (\$32,176,728) is passed through to HASA for supportive housing programs, where it partially funds 2,767 housing units operated by 45 non-profit

supportive housing providers. An additional \$1 million in HOPWA funding supports HASA case management staff.

About 32% of NYC's HOPWA allocation is administered directly by DOHMH's Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control (BHAPC) in grants to non-profit organizations that provide a range of housing services for low-income people living with HIV are ineligible for HASA due to their immigration status or because they do not have an AIDS diagnosis, along with other hard-to-reach populations such as people living with HIV returning home from prison. If federal cuts to New York City's HOPWA grant are applied to DOHMH/BHAPC-administered units, it will result in more people living with HIV/AIDS becoming homeless since many do not qualify for HASA and have nowhere else to turn. At a time of record homelessness, we cannot afford to cut housing services that would only add to the crisis, especially among some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

*We recommend the following for NYC OMB, NYC HRA/HASA, and NYC DOHMH:*

- Because we are concerned about any cuts to HIV/AIDS housing contracts administered by DOHMH/BHAPC, the administration should apply any federal HOPWA cuts to HRA/HASA's allocation and use CTL and state match funding to replace the loss in federal funding within HASA's supportive housing portfolio.

### **New York State Plan to End AIDS**

Even without a cure or vaccine, we now have the tools to end the AIDS epidemic by dramatically reducing new infections and insuring all people living with HIV can attain optimal health.

New York City has already achieved extraordinary, albeit uneven, progress. There has been a nearly 40 percent decrease in new HIV infections during the past decade, even though there was no decline on the national level. New HIV infections among people who inject drugs have declined 90 percent since the height of the epidemic. We have virtually eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Despite these reasons for optimism, New York City's AIDS epidemic remains severe. One notable exception to declining incidence is the rising rates of new infections among young gay men and other men who have sex with men, especially young men of color. At least half of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses are among people in high (20 – 30% below FPL) or very high poverty (>30% below FPL) areas, and 83 percent of new diagnoses are among Blacks and Latinos.

VOCAL-NY is part of a broad-based coalition that is urging Governor Cuomo to convene a Task Force to End AIDS In New York by 2020, which would serve as a national and international model. Four out of five New Yorkers living with HIV reside in New York City, so the City Council and Mayor de Blasio will need to play an active role in a statewide plan to end AIDS. We

support the coalition-backed recommendations attached to our testimony that outlines areas where New York City's leadership will be needed.

Central to a plan to end AIDS in New York will be doubling the number of people living with HIV who have an undetectable viral load. In order to do this, we will need a strong and functional HASA that meets its statutory obligation to provide medically appropriate emergency and permanent housing for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS.

Housing is essential to scaling up access to care and treatment. The housing status of a person living with HIV/AIDS is a stronger predictor of their health and adherence to medical care than other factors like demographic characteristics (e.g. race or gender), drug and alcohol use, or use of social services. Compared to stably housed people living with HIV/AIDS, those who are homeless experience worse overall physical and mental health, including higher rates of hospitalization and emergency room use, lower CD4 counts (indicating a weaker immune system), higher viral loads, and poorer adherence to antiretroviral therapy.

Stable housing helps prevent new HIV infections as well because it reduces risk behaviors, including needle sharing and high-risk sex, and improves access and adherence to medication that lower HIV viral loads, which dramatically cut the risk of transmission to sexual partners. The emergence of treatment as prevention, a public health strategy that aims to increase the percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS with an undetectable viral load in order to reduce the risk of transmission, further underscores the importance of stable housing, which is strongly associated with low viral loads. Moreover, promoting stable housing is especially an important component of addressing the "treatment cascade," or the drop-off in people who are diagnosed with HIV, remained connected to care and achieve viral suppression.

It's no surprise, therefore, that housing is cost-effective. Stable housing saves money by reducing utilization of emergency and acute care, reducing the number of people in long-term care facilities like nursing homes, preventing new infections and keeping people out of the emergency shelter system.

In fact, our current system of housing and supportive services for people living with HIV/AIDS is one reason why New York is ahead of the rest of the country when it comes to our rates of viral suppression – 41 percent of people living with HIV in New York City have an undetectable viral load compared to 28 percent nationwide.

**We raise this to make you aware of this important effort and note that our recommendations fit within a broader effort to end the AIDS epidemic in New York by the end of this decade.**

**Thank you.**

# New York's Plan to End AIDS

## Key Elements and Next Steps

### Background

Although there are more New Yorkers living with HIV than in any other state in the nation, it is within our reach to end the epidemic that has plagued us for more than 30 years. There is still no cure at hand, but **we now have the knowledge and means to *dramatically* reduce new HIV infections and promote optimal health for those with HIV** via concerted and coordinated efforts by and among the community, government, consumers, health care and service providers, and academia. Therefore, **we urge Governor Cuomo to create a *Task Force to End AIDS in New York*** charged with developing a strategic blueprint and plan in collaboration with the AIDS Institute. In so doing, **New York will serve as a national model for ending the epidemic.**

The momentum to bring the AIDS epidemic to a close in New York already exists. NYS has seen an almost 40% decrease in new HIV diagnoses in the last decade, with fewer new infections each year, while nationally there has been no decline in the number of new HIV infections diagnosed each year. Injection drug use had once been the cause of more than half of all NYS cases, but has been reduced by over 90%. Mother-to-child transmission is down 99%.

For these and other reasons, ***now* is the time to develop and implement an action plan to end AIDS in New York.** Beyond our significant successes to date, innovations in policy, program and science all point to the opportunity for major reductions in new infections. The medications that dramatically improve quality of life for persons with HIV both suppress viral load and prevent transmission to others. Whether taken as treatment by a person with diagnosed HIV, or as nPEP or PrEP by an uninfected individual, studies evaluating the prevention impact of antiretrovirals show clear benefits in stopping the spread of HIV. The NYS testing law mandates that all persons age 13-64 be routinely offered HIV testing in clinical settings, and new test technologies allow earlier detection of the virus, thereby permitting treatment to begin when persons are most infectious. The testing law also permits the use of surveillance data to find those with diagnosed HIV who are not in treatment in order to link them back to care.

### Executive and Legislative Next Steps

If we are to meet with success, and in addition to any detailed strategic plan to be developed by the task force appointed by the Governor, the following items must be included in either the 30-day amendments to the Executive Budget for FY14-15 or via legislative action:

- **\$10 million in new funding for the AIDS Institute** to implement any plan developed by the task force;
- An affordable housing protection to ensure that disabled people with HIV/AIDS who receive rental assistance **pay no more than 30 percent of their income towards their rent**, which would both prevent homelessness among at-risk people with HIV and enable others with HIV who are now in shelters and other emergency settings to move into much needed supportive housing;
- Article 7 language to **eliminate the use of condoms as evidence** of prostitution by law enforcement officials; and
- Article 7 language to **legalize the possession of syringes.**

## Key elements of a New York State Plan to End AIDS

*This summary of recommendations was submitted by a coalition of activists and organizations to Courtney Burke, the Governor's Deputy Secretary for Health, to be considered by a task force appointed by Governor Cuomo to develop the plan.*

New York State has borne the highest burden of HIV since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic in 1981. New York has the people, institutions, resources, and political will to end AIDS throughout the state, and to become a leader nationally and globally in showing how to end AIDS. Therefore, New York State should make a long-term commitment to, and a strategic priority of, ending AIDS for all New Yorkers: ending the illness and death associated with HIV infection and the progression to AIDS; as well as the related suffering, stigma, and devastation of our communities and our people.

Ending AIDS in New York will rely on five related activities:

1. **Twenty-first-century surveillance: Know your epidemic.** Know who is living with HIV and make sure they're getting needed services. Know where HIV is being transmitted and intervene there quickly to stop chains of uncontrolled transmission. Use twenty-first-century surveillance tools, such as fourth-generation simultaneous detection of HIV p24 antigen and antibodies, to diagnose HIV infection and distinguish between acute and chronic infection. Everyone should know his or her HIV status. People at highest risk for HIV should be testing more frequently (e.g., 2–4 times per year).
2. **Evidence-based combination HIV prevention for both HIV-negative and HIV-positive persons.** Routine and voluntary universal HIV testing is a gateway to HIV prevention for those who test negative. Prevention services should be comprehensive and should include high-quality HIV-, reproductive health- and sexual health education at all levels; nonoccupational and occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) available on-site (for occupational) and in pharmacies and community health clinics (for non-occupational) within two hours of exposure. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) should be available for those who need it. Both PEP and PrEP candidates should be eligible for comprehensive prevention services, including drug treatment and harm reduction; depression; mental health; trauma and violence screening; treatment; housing; and other supportive services. Combination HIV prevention care and services should be required from all New York State providers—public and private—as essential services under the ACA prevention mandate. Embedding specific HIV quality and care management requirements in *all* MRT care management initiatives, with a primary goal of rapid and sustained viral suppression for all, will improve and maintain the health of persons with HIV and prevent new cases.
3. **Focus on filling the gaps in the HIV continuum of care to maximize the speed, proportion, and number of people able to successfully suppress their HIV as soon as possible once they are diagnosed.** New York State should implement a continuum of HIV care initiative in line with the initiative President Obama promulgated nationally on July 15, 2013: ***Federal guidelines now recommend antiretroviral treatment for all adults and adolescents with HIV in the United States.*** Instead of waiting for the immune system to show signs of decline, experts now recommend starting treatment right away. Evidence indicates that treating HIV as soon as possible reduces HIV-related complications. ***Treatment reduces the risk of HIV transmission.*** Along with other proven prevention methods, such as condom use, abstinence, and comprehensive drug treatment, effective treatment reduces the risk of HIV transmission. An NIH-sponsored study showed that among heterosexual couples, starting treatment early reduced transmission risk by 96%. ***Screening for HIV is now recommended for all persons 15–65 in the United States.*** About half of Americans have never been tested for HIV, and nearly 200,000 people living with HIV in this country are unaware that they are infected. Screening all persons between 15 and 65 years of age is now a grade "A" recommendation of the independent U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.[1] In New York State, 156,287 people were estimated to be living with HIV; 18% of HIV-positive New Yorkers do not know their status; 46% are not receiving regular HIV care; 53% are not receiving continuous care; and 63% are not successfully controlling their viral load. New York's ongoing Medicaid reform and

expansion, plus the advent of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) offer the opportunity to fill the gaps in the HIV treatment cascade.

4. **Ensure the availability of housing and essential supportive services for all New Yorkers, whether HIV-negative or HIV-positive, so that they remain healthy and aviremic, and do not contract or transmit HIV; and support research needed to improve service delivery and optimize outcomes.** Continued reliance on Ryan White CARE Act and HOPWA-funded services, as well as comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment for important comorbidities, such as depression, diabetes, drug use, mental health, trauma, viral hepatitis (hepatitis A and B vaccination; hepatitis B and C treatment; hepatitis C cure), will be required to eliminate the risk of new HIV infections and to ensure that those receiving HIV care are retained and successfully treated. Effectively addressing homelessness and hunger and meeting other subsistence needs will be crucial to engaging and keeping the most vulnerable persons in care. Clean needles, harm reduction, and opiate substitution therapy are essential as well. Decriminalization of condom possession, nonviolent drug violations, and adult consensual sex work; reducing the burden of incarceration and entanglement with the correctional system for young men; and addressing other structural contributors to the HIV pandemic should also play a role.
5. **Commit political leaders and all New York communities to leadership and ownership of the New York Plan to End AIDS.** Akin to the leadership required to drive wholesale Medicaid redesign and the successful expansion of insurance coverage under the ACA, improving HIV prevention and care for all New Yorkers will require leadership and commitment from Governor Cuomo, legislative leaders and local officials, particularly New York City Mayor de Blasio.

### **Summary**

In short, the additional actions and investments required to drive HIV below epidemic levels in NYS is very modest. Much of what needs to be done can be accomplished at the policy level, and the few programmatic enhancements envisioned will pay for themselves as each infection averted saves the system **\$379,668 in lifetime medical costs**. Current NYS efforts are already saving \$1 billion/year. **The further reduction in new infections brought about by New York's "Plan to End AIDS" could *more than double* the savings.**

Access to more convenient and less costly antiretroviral drugs and greatly diminished need for HIV-related emergency room visits and inpatient stays will also yield large returns that, if invested strategically, will more than cover what the task force might propose. Importantly, legislative support for the **NYS Medicaid Director's efforts to negotiate a win-win deal with pharmaceutical companies**, would lower the cost of life-saving treatment and bring a quicker end to the epidemic.

Lastly, **Governor Cuomo's leadership in establishing this process and very publicly committing to its goals, together with vocal expressions of support from key Senate and Assembly leaders, will be vital to our success.** With this support, the task force will devise an interagency plan in its first three months to ensure the availability of essential services that support health, prevention, and retention in care for all New Yorkers, whether infected or not, and guide the necessary investments. By applying the latest scientific evidence in the context of universal health coverage New York State will show the way for all to end AIDS.

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1. White House. Accelerating improvements in HIV prevention and care in the United States through the HIV Care Continuum Initiative. 2013 July 15. Available from: <http://www.aids.gov/federal-resources/national-hiv-aids-strategy/hiv-care-continuum-initiative-fact-sheet.pdf>.

2. O'Connell D. HIV/AIDS in New York State. Revitalizing the New York State HIV/AIDS response: ending the AIDS epidemic in New York State. Presentation at consultation meeting at Columbia University; 2013 May 6; New York, NY.



Hello, I am Quentin Walcott; the Co-Executive Director of CONNECT. I would like to thank the General Welfare Committee Chair, all the members in attendance for the opportunity to present today.

As many of you are aware, CONNECT is a New York City nonprofit dedicated to **preventing** interpersonal violence and promoting gender justice ([www.connectnyc.org](http://www.connectnyc.org)). By building partnerships with individuals and communities, CONNECT strives to help change the beliefs, behaviors and institutions that perpetuate violence. Through legal empowerment, grassroots mobilization and transformative education, CONNECT works to create safe families and peaceful communities.

Through CONNECT's Community Empowerment Program we create new partnerships with community, school and faith based organizations across New York City as well as maintaining and enhancing existing partnerships. Through the CONNECT Training Institute, we educated over 600 community members and social service professionals about the complex dynamics and consequences of family and domestic violence. Our Legal Advocacy Program served over 1,200 people, actively representing 50 DV survivors in immigration proceedings before USCIS and DHS as well as providing various levels of representation to 37 children of those clients.

Funding provided by NYC City Council makes a difference to CONNECT and the individuals, families and communities we serve and partner with.

## Statement of Need

Despite increased awareness, more domestic violence shelters, batterer's intervention programs, laws and legislation, domestic violence continues in epidemic proportions and contributes to many of New York City's most intractable problems among them drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, community violence and gang involvement, poor educational outcomes. Domestic violence puts a substantial burden on our public health system.<sup>1</sup> It is a leading cause of injury to US women ages 15 – 44 and dramatically increases a woman's risk of having asthma, heart disease and a stroke. Several studies show that homicide is a leading cause of death for pregnant women!

In 2012 <sup>2</sup> New York City police responded to *over 720 incidents* of domestic violence a day. There were 69 *family related homicides* in New York City and in 72% of these cases there was no prior police contact. The New York City Domestic violence hotline receives an average of 290 calls a day.<sup>3</sup> Tragically, as alarming as these statistics are, they represent only a fraction of the women and their children who were struggling with an abusive partner. There are thousands of cases that go unreported and undetected. When people do reach out for help, they are often silenced by well meaning people or organizations that don't know how to respond, are not aware of resources and out of lack of education and understanding, make it the situation worse.

What if family, friends, neighbors had known what to do? How to speak and listen to victims? How to approach the abusive partners? What if people knew where to refer to the appropriate help source?

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics are from Futures Without Violence [www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)

<sup>2</sup> Statistics for 2013 are not yet compiled

<sup>3</sup> See [www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence](http://www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence)

What if teachers, counselors, co workers, religious leaders and community activists knew where to turn when they suspected that a colleague, student or parishioner was not safe? What if victims, survivors, perpetrators and bystanders knew that there were people in their families, places in their communities that could offer them healing and support?

## **CONNECT Methodology and Guiding Principles**

CONNECT has been working tirelessly over the last 10 years to build the capacity of individuals, families, communities, and systems to intervene early and prevent domestic violence. Through our trainings, educational workshops, community events, and ongoing partnerships, we equip and empower community leaders, faith leaders, professionals, and activists with the skills to create their own strategies to end domestic and gender violence. All our programs are designed to help women, men and youth and the various communities and contexts they come from, gain a deeper awareness of the ways the intimate violence in their own lives both shapes, and is shaped by systemic violence and structural oppression.

We believe that open and honest dialogue is a critical practice in our work to end violence and abuse. Our roundtables, circles, and community dialogues offer safe spaces where people can name and challenge the dynamics of power and control. Through listening and sharing, new ways to resist and transform violence emerge. Commitments to nonviolence, to community and to each other are strengthened. This is a powerful strategy for moving people from silent bystanders to allies and activists in the work of preventing violence and building peace.

Following are guiding principles for our work:

We believe that people can change, that healing is possible and that people are longing for peaceful, mutual, and respectful relationships.

We take a holistic approach and address the root causes of violence because we understand that people experience and resist violence on the individual, community and systemic levels.

All our work is trauma informed, meaning that we are aware of the effects of trauma and are prepared for a significant number of our participants in workshops, seminars, roundtables and circles to have multiple layers of trauma that they are dealing with.

We employ a partnership model i.e. understanding everyone we work with as a partner /or potential partner in the work to create safe families and peaceful communities.

We embrace and celebrate differences and affirm that we share a common destiny.

## **With support from the New York City Council**

CONNECT's 11 staff members, and 6 volunteers have built partnerships with over 200 individuals, community based organizations including immigrant, faith-based organizations, schools, and health workers.

We hope very much that you will continue to help us provide programs and services and join us in the work to create safer families and peaceful communities in New York City. Thank you for your time and attention.



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NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2015

Hearing before the General Welfare Committee

Testimony Regarding RAPP (the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program)

March 24, 2014

Presented by:

Lucia Riveccio, LCSW

Assistant Executive Director, Edwin Gould Services for Children & Families

STEPS to End Family Violence

Contact

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646-315-7633

STEPS to End Family Violence respectfully submits the following testimony regarding the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP).

Good afternoon, Councilmember Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. I would first like to thank the Council for your unwavering support of RAPP over the past four years. Your help was critical to the restoration of RAPP each year, and of course to this year's baselining of RAPP in the Executive budget, for which we also thank the Human Resources Administration.

I am thrilled to appear before you today to discuss moving forward; rather than scrambling to keep our programs whole, we can now speak to the core of the issue, which is, of course, prevention of violence in New York City over the long-term.

STEPS to End Family Violence has been a RAPP provider since its inception in 1999, and before that a provider of its precursor, Adopt-A-School. We have witnessed over and over again the transformational nature of RAPP; of the teens who have found safety and healing from being abused, stalked, or intimidated; who are bullied and marginalized by peers; and who come to us from homes where there is violence. We have spoken with many of you about the counseling, education, and support we provide that help them heal and grow into healthy, confident, and productive adults.

In line with HRA's own mission - this is a program that promotes self-sufficiency in every sense of the term. Our summer Peer Leaders learn the responsibility of a job, the commitment to a team, and how to manage time and money. As a measure of our success, in a city in which the high school graduation rate is 64%, **96% of our Peer Leaders graduated high school last year and close to 90% are attending college.** Those few students who chose not to attend college, are gainfully employed. We are so very proud of our young men and women, some of whom you will hear from today, who are learning the importance of healthy relating, of responsibility, higher education, and perhaps most important – self-worth.

Not only is NYC's Teen RAPP the largest primary prevention program in the US – this is a model that works and has been working for 14 years. In fact, a Columbia University report released in 2010 states the importance to urban minority youth of connectedness and engagement to success and a reduction in aggression and violence in school. RAPP provides just that connective tissue for our teens.

We believe that this program should be expanded to reach every child in New York City's schools. An investment in RAPP is an investment in our City's future and a significant long-term savings in City services down the road. Will we continue to move from crisis to crisis; providing long-term help to only a few while we simply wait on the sidelines for what we know will come tomorrow for the many?

Consider the following:

- the costs of housing a survivor of violence and her family in a domestic violence shelter and then a long-term DHS shelter when the family times out of the DV

- shelter;
- the costs of managing the mental health ramifications on the children of growing up as victims of trauma;
- the costs of foster care services for that family when perhaps the custodial parent is arrested and detained in the course of protecting the child from abuse;
- the cost of incarceration and legal services;
- the cost to the private sector business when the parent is unable to work due to the abuse;
- health care costs when the injured partner seeks treatment;
- and the list goes on. We know that these costs amount to tens, and even hundreds of millions or more.

Prevention is pivotal in any public health issue. And the earlier we start the better. Although our aim is to prevent violence first and foremost – the ancillary effects to this lead to cost savings that far outweigh the City's initial \$3M investment.

We believe you can't find a program with a better cost-benefit. With a reach of 47,000 teens across the 5 boroughs, the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program costs the city a mere \$63 per student per year. An amount that pales in comparison to the exponential savings realized down the line in services that our teens will never need.

The Council has been there for our young people over the past four years - many of you sitting here today were part of a NYC Council that recognized the tremendous benefit to having RAPP in our schools and acted to save our program. **Will you now be the Council that works with us to expand this critical program?**

To the entire City Council, we thank you once again for your attention to this important issue and your help in ensuring that RAPP remains in its current 30 campuses. We hope the Council will continue to take an active role in supporting this programming and, indeed, supporting its expansion throughout New York City.

**Preliminary Budget Hearing of the  
NY City Council General Welfare Committee  
City Hall**

**March 24, 2014**

**Luz Santiago  
Associate Director  
District Council 1707 AFSCME**

Good afternoon, Chairman Levin and all the members of the General Welfare Committee. On behalf of Raglan George, Jr. and the members of the District Council 1707 Executive Board, I want to thank you for the chance to speak regarding the expansion of center-based early childhood education in our public day care centers and Head Start centers.

We have reached a new era of discussion regarding stabilizing our centers for children and parents, finding new ways to secure employment and training for early childhood educators and once again be proud that New York City has no equal in providing safe, quality and affordable child care for its most vulnerable citizens and their parents.

We are grateful for the support that the City Council has given our centers for the past two years relating to funding of nearly sixty centers through the council's discretionary funding. And we are also grateful that we finally have an administration concerned about base lining public center-based child care.

While the administration has secured funding for these centers in its Preliminary Budget, the process to approve these funds legally by way of negotiated acquisition or by a realistic request for proposal process that includes the Day Care Employees Local 205 and the Head Start Employees Local 95 contracts must proceed right now..

This process must include the locals' contractual wages and benefits so that the approval for Universal Pre-Kindergarten and other programs can proceed in the available and ready classrooms without the rancor associated with the previous administration.

We implore the council to work with this administration and quickly secure the funding for these centers and look forward to discussing the ignored concepts of wage parity and additional education and training to have enough professional personnel ready for the expansion of early childhood education in the city.

**Testimony of Mabel Everett**  
**President, Day Care Employees Local 205, DC 1707, AFSCME**

**3/24/14 City Council Public hearing**  
**On the FY2015 Preliminary Budget**

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Mabel Everett and I am the President of Day Care Employees Local 205 of District Council 1707.

Over the last two years, the Council has shown its strong support for our City's child care system by restoring *full funding* to over 70 ACS child care centers that were not funded by Mayor Bloomberg under his so-called "Early Learn" program. These Health Department certified centers continue to provide vital services in communities of need *in over half the City Council districts*.

Unfortunately, these City Council discretionary funded centers are again in danger. Here is why:

- Our new Mayor DeBlasio **did restore all** the Council's child care center funding in his Preliminary FY15 Budget; and we are so grateful for that.
- **BUT, this funding is not specifically directed to the Council's discretionary funded centers.**
- The reason, I am told, is that when funding is base-lined in the Mayor's Budget, it can only be spent through the City's procurement process.
- I am also told that there are absolutely ways to procure (contract with) these particular centers that will satisfy the legal, City Charter requirements.

Now, I admit that I do not know much about the City Budget process; so I can't explain how this should be done. But I do know that it can be done; and that **these particular 70 child care centers deserve to be funded; and must be funded**. They have proven their value by operating efficiently and continuously, in contrast to the so-called "Early Learn" centers, many of which took months to begin operating.

Working parents rely on quality child care services so that they can go to work and not worry that their child is in the care of someone unqualified or overburdened. The loss of these child care services would be a devastating blow to these particular communities that rely on them. We ask the Council to press our friend, Mayor DeBlasio, to find a way to keep these City Council funded child care centers open.

We *thank the City Council* for your continued support of our City's subsidized child care system.



# MET COUNCIL

ACTS OF CHARITY • DEEDS OF KINDNESS צדקה וגמילות חסדים

New York City Council

March 25, 2014

Preliminary Budget Hearing-General Welfare Committee

Testimony of Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

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## About Met Council

Since its inception in 1972, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) has been a defender and advocate for New Yorkers in need. We provide our clients with comprehensive social services designed to stabilize crises, while giving them adequate tools for continued self-sufficiency. During this time of persistent economic and social inequality in New York City, which our new Mayor and City Council are beginning to address, it is especially crucial that services and resources are in place to assist needy New Yorkers.

## JCC Network

Together with our local Jewish Community Councils, Met Council aids and strengthens thousands of people annually, in every ZIP code in the city, with culturally sensitive services and programs for all ethnicities. Although the word “Jewish” appears in our name, we serve everyone in need, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion, with equal care, sensitivity and warmth. Our clients and our community councils reflect the enriching diversity of this great city.

## Met Council’s Unique Social Service Model Has a Proven Track Record

Met Council is distinguished from other social service organizations through our broad continuum of anti-poverty programs, which includes Crisis Intervention Services, Affordable Housing, Kosher Food Pantries, Family Violence Program, Benefits Access, Legal & Immigration Services, Career Services, Home Services, Home Care, and Capacity Building for small nonprofits. We deliver services in clients’ native language in a culturally sensitive and dignified way. Met Council’s “no wrong door” policy ensures that no matter which point of entry

clients use to access services, they will be assisted with all of their needs in order to solve the root of the problem. We target our programs to communities with high concentrations of working-poor and near-poor households, whose unmet needs are not fully addressed by government and other social service agencies, because they hover just above the Federal Poverty threshold.

### **Poverty in New York City**

Even as the recession has ended, the City's poverty rate continues to inch up and the gap between the rich and poor remains stubbornly wide. It is increasing especially rapidly among working New Yorkers, as revealed by the Census Bureau figures for 2013. One out of four New Yorkers is low-income and can barely make it from month to month, while working as hard as they possibly can. Jewish Poverty in New York is subject to many of the same forces and continues to grow at an alarming rate as well. Presently, one in four New York City Jewish households is poor, and one in ten is near-poor. The need for emergency food, crisis intervention, and other comprehensive social services continues to increase dramatically.

### **City Council Discretionary Funds Are Critical to Met Council's Mission and Services**

The alarming rise in poverty underlines the need for policies that provide direct mechanisms to fund grassroots community and neighborhood efforts that fill in service gaps for working-poor and near-poor populations. The discretionary funding Met Council receives from our City Council partners fill these service gaps by funding Met Council Crisis Social Workers and enabling us to leverage privately raised dollars used for emergency cash assistance and food vouchers. Discretionary funding enables organizations like Met Council and our network of JCCs to have the capacity and the organizational infrastructure to be responsive to emerging needs of your constituents, natural disasters, and other unexpected crises. Any decrease in funds would have a drastic impact on entire neighborhoods' support systems.

### **Met Council's Crisis Intervention Services**

Met Council's comprehensive Crisis Intervention Services engage clients through a thorough assessment to provide an effective intervention to lead toward self-sufficiency and stop the downward cycle a crisis can bring about. Crisis Social Workers work with clients to create a plan that would guide and ensure their future ability to stay independent, and often provide direct

financial intervention/assistance to propel this. **In fiscal year 2013, Met Council distributed \$4,826,080 of financial assistance and \$488,875 of food vouchers—all privately raised funds.** The Family Violence staff uses similar assessment, interventions and resources, but with extra focus on safety and healing. In all client meetings, Crisis staff are focused on understanding why the client is currently in a crisis, what is needed to ameliorate it, and how we can help with stability. What is distinctive about Met Council's Crisis Services is our ability to tap into a network of specialized, gap-filling resources at the grassroots level, a holistic approach that supports clients in their communities.

### **Met Council's Handyman Services**

New York City Council discretionary funds also sustain Met Council's Project Metropair/Handyman Services. This program provides timely repair and handyman services to low-income seniors, immigrants, and Holocaust survivors, enabling the most vulnerable in our communities to live in their homes safely and securely with an integrated social service component. Met Council workers are available to install grab bars in the shower, smoothen floors, strengthen door locks, lower peepholes and perform other repairs completely free-of-charge. By performing repairs in a frail or elderly person's apartment today, we can preclude the catastrophic costs and agonizing trauma of an accident or break-in tomorrow. **Last year, Met Council served 484 frail individuals through Project Metropair/Handymen.**

### **Met Council's Food Program**

Whether they are needy families struggling to feed their children, low-income immigrants, or the frail elderly, Met Council provides our clients with emergency as well as continuous food assistance. Met Council assembles and distributes emergency food packages throughout the five boroughs, using our warehouse and extensive network of local partner organizations. Every day, Met Council trucks transport bulk food to our warehouse. We assemble the food into individual packages, each with 15 pounds (or 9 meals). We bring our food packages to 122 sites around the city, where they are distributed to needy individuals and families. Relying on volunteers for cost-effectiveness, we distribute millions of pounds of food each year with only seven paid staff members. City Council funding pays for these staff, who are needed to coordinate the donation, purchase, packaging, and delivery of emergency food. **In fiscal year 2013, Met Council distributed 4.2 million pounds of food.**



We cannot express more strongly that we would not be able to provide critical social services to over 100,000 New Yorkers each year without the vital partnership of New York City Council through the following four initiatives:

- **Crisis Intervention and Project Metropair-** Discretionary funds help to sustain our core programs, such as Crisis Intervention and Project Metropair, which help to keep frail seniors secure and independent in their homes.
- **Extended Services Program/Information and Referral-** Extended Services Program enables Met Council to deliver culturally-sensitive services to assist clients with immediate financial crises such as eviction, utility turn-offs, sudden unemployment, and other emergencies.
- **Immigrant Opportunity Initiative (IOI) -** IOI enables Met Council to provide critically needed services to a wide base of New York's immigrant community through trusted community partners located in diverse neighborhoods.
- **DoVE-Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiatives-** DoVE enables Met Council's specially-trained staff to provide case management, counseling, financial assistance, legal referrals, client and child advocacy, court escorts, and access to Met Council's holistic support services.

We deeply value your leadership and partnership and look forward to working together to help the needy throughout the New York area.

Thank you.

Sarah Felsenthal

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

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**Testimony**  
**New York City Council General Welfare Committee**  
**Budget Hearings**  
**March 24, 2014**

By Ralph Palladino  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

N.Y.C. Clerical-Administrative Employees Local 1549, DC37

Local 1549 represents 16,000 employees of the City of New York working in nearly every city agency, 6,000 of whom work in the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). Most determine eligibility for Food Stamps and Medicaid (Eligibility Specialists Levels II and III). Some of our members, themselves, are food stamp recipients.

The proposed City Budget for 2014-15 does not call for reductions in staffing. We agree with the new city administration that downsizing of staffing in the City's Human Resources Administration (HRA) is not warranted. Poor people, working people and families need support, not service cuts, from the city. Keeping able bodied and qualified employees on the job in order to properly service the public is critically important.

**Concerns and Requests**

**Keep eligibility determination for Healthcare Reform in the city.** This is the best way to ensure that those eligible will receive Medicaid. Cultural and linguistic barriers are better dealt with by a workforce familiar with the clients and their communities. Many, if not most, of those seeking assistance do not have access to computers and, in some cases, do not possess the computer skills to navigate the system.

HRA is already a network throughout the city - including most of the city's public hospitals. The public in need of healthcare knows HRA institutions provide assistance that they need.

We ask the City Council to pro-actively support keeping eligibility determination for Healthcare insurance in the city, where it belongs. The City could become its own servicing district for health insurance access.

**Staffing for Medicaid must be increased.** Due to lack of staffing, some Medicaid applicants cannot receive their benefit quickly. This means there may be a period of time that they are uninsured and might be denied health care access. The exception would be the Emergency Rooms where they would instead with the costs unfairly being absorbed by the NYC Health and Hospital Corporations and other providers.

Facilitated enrollment in healthcare leads to many people being signed up for insurance. However, if there is a staffing shortage of those who assist clients with eligibility then those applications cannot be processed in a timely fashion, if at all.

**More Medicaid and SNAP centers should be opened.** The previous administration closed centers including Medicaid Application Program centers in HHC

institutions. This was due to the city's mandated 10% reduction of rent. This has led to crowding in the remaining centers. Too often they are farther away than the closed ones from where people live.

**In the Supplemental Nutrition Application Program (SNAP), there still remains a shortage of Eligibility Specialists Levels II and III.** Due to the lack of staffing of experienced, trained civil servants, HRA has hired temporary workers from private agencies to help monitor on line applications submitted by clients at centers. Two main questions arise from this: (1) Do these temporary employees receive the same level of training as regular employees? And (2) Is client's confidentiality being violated? Our members are civil servants who must successfully pass a test and are properly trained and vetted for their jobs.

The lack of staffing also has led to a delay in needy clients receiving their benefits. They must be given an appointment to return for servicing on another day. This means delays in the processing of their request and, at times, their cases being closed due to time limit requirements. Unfortunately, too many clients do not know how to navigate or even use a computer.

**ATTACHED PLEASE FIND A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THIS FROM A FRONT LINE ELIGIBILITY SPECIALIST.**

**Language barriers exist for clients.** Unfortunately there is a growing need for more multilingual services and interpreter services. The city is contracting out all of its interpreter services. This means that there is little real face to face interpreting which is the most preferred and efficient means of contact. The computer system is not equipped to handle the various languages and dialects spoken and read by clients.

**The city has not seen fit to utilize the civil service Interpreter Title.** If the city did utilize the title it would make signing up for Food Stamps, Medicaid and other services, faster, easier and more efficient for the public.

**Childcare Services must be increased.** Our members use childcare services in order to become and stay employed. Too often, families or unregulated childcare centers are utilized by them and the public because it is cheaper. Also, because too many quality, certified childcare centers were closed. It is important to increase the number of centers and make childcare more affordable.

At Bellevue Hospital, Local 1549 led a team to build an on-site, 24 hour childcare center. At one time, there was a childcare center at One Police Plaza. The city should investigate the feasibility of finding and using space to build or house childcare centers.

**Agency for Children's Services (ACS) Eliminates Civil Service Jobs.** Hundreds of clerical positions have been eliminated by ACS. They have been replaced by outside contractors, College Aides and Welfare Experience Program (WEP) workers. These workers are being exploited in that they make little pay with no benefits. ACS has become a low wage poverty employer.

### **A New Day!**

Local 1549 is looking forward to working with the new city administration and City Council in improving and expanding city services. We look forward to assisting and offer solutions.

THANK YOU.

SEE FOOD STAMP ATTACHMENT BEGINNING ON NEXT PAGE

## **TESTIMONY ATTACHMENT**

### **Need for additional staff in food stamp centers**

#### **From an Eligibility Specialist working in SNAP**

Client interview process:

Prior to 2/10/2014 clients were able to come into the center and apply (same day) for food stamps.

Once the client passed through security would be directed to the Front Door Reception area to be provided a ticket (if in a model center\*) to go to the area of service.

If applying, client would be given an application to be filled out while waiting for the ticket to be called.

- If the client is still waiting after 3pm, the client is given an appointment to come back the next day or within a few days. The ticket and application is taken from the client and the basic information is entered into the computer to register the case (give client a case #) and schedule the appointment for the client interview

Once the client ticket was called, the client would receive a face to face interview.

- Client must have a picture ID to apply, if not client will not be eligible to receive emergency food stamps (food stamps to be received within 3 to 5 business days)
  - If the client does not have a photo ID, will not be eligible for food stamps for 30 days providing all other criteria for eligibility have been met
- During the interview the client is asked to provide proof of the household composition (all parties living in the home whether applying or not), proof of citizenship or alien status (permanent resident card or foreign passport), proof of valid social security #, proof of income (from employment, social security, unemployment, contribution (any money received by client), proof of rent expense (if any).
- Proof of address is required for all persons applying, whether by current lease, statement from the client landlord, school letter for children, or active Medicaid case with the same address stated on application. Utility bills are required if client pays the expense or to verify the landlord as the primary tenant or homeowner if client submits a statement (not a lease).
- Proof of citizenship is birth certificate, resident cards, foreign passports or foreign birth certificates and social security cards.

Once the interview has been completed, any documents that the client did not provide will be requested on a form (113K) for the client to return within 10 days of the initial interview.

If the client does not comply within the 10 days the case will be closed

If the requested documents are submitted, the documents will be reviewed, verified through collateral calls to the persons writing the letter (ex: job letter or landlord letter) to verify the information is correct and not false documentation, processed to be accepted and food stamp benefits issued according to the

budget submitted by the computer system (POS-Paperless Operating System and WMS-Welfare Management System). Once the budget has been accepted, the Eligibility Specialist will issue (thru computer) the food stamps that the client is eligible to receive. Then the case is sent to the supervisor for all actions to be approved.

On 2/10/2014 HRA rolled out the PC Bank program in my location

The PC bank is an area set up with 55 computers to allow clients to complete their applications online in the home center. They are able to submit documents (if available) by using the copy machine provided for the area to make copies and drop off with staff to be scanned and indexed by an Eligibility Specialist or Clerical Associate at a later time. Once the information (application) has been signed and submitted, the client entered data is sent through the computer to MARU (Mail Processing Unit), where mailed and online applications are sent to be registered (entered into the computer system-POS) and assigned a case #, then routed by zip code (borough) to the food stamp center for the interview to be conducted by the Eligibility Specialist.

- Once the case is registered and assigned to a food stamp center, the client will be issued a letter stating the day and time they will receive a telephone interview.
  - Telephone interview **(same steps as stated for face to face interview....above)**
  - If the client does not answer when called for the telephone interview, the ES is instructed to make 2 additional attempts, if no answer the case is closed as a client failed to keep interview.
  - The client will be mailed a letter stating missed interview and the timeframe for which they must come to the center to do a face to face interview or they will not be entitled to receive food stamp benefits.

If the client is unable to complete the online application, the client is given an appointment to return to the center on a different day to conduct a face to face interview

**(special circumstances, client may receive a same day interview from PC bank)**

If the client is able to complete the online application they have the option to request a phone interview or to be scheduled for a face to face interview. A letter will be mailed out with an appointment day and time for all face to face interviews.

- ❖ If the client takes too long on the PC bank online application, the system has been kicking them out and the client starts over (if they do not notify the ES in the area for assistance) resulting in an extended amount of time spent completing an application.

With the roll out of the PC bank, over half of the existing staff (39 people total) were voluntarily or involuntarily transferred to TIPS 43 (4<sup>th</sup> floor in this building) to conduct telephone interviews and to service the clients from the PC bank

Due to the lack of clerical associates there is no one to process the documents that are submitted by clients whether through the PC bank or by use of the drop box (clients can drop off documents instead of waiting long hours to be serviced)

- This creates a problem when the client interview is conducted and no information is available for the ES to be able to verify.
- The case will either be closed or the client will be forced to resubmit the required (requested) documents in order to be eligible to receive food stamps
- Or in some cases the documents have been scanned but there are no clerks or available ES workers to index the documents into the system for verification

Also with limited staff, most clients have to wait upwards of 3 to 4 hours to be seen by an ES worker in order to conduct their interview

(ex: client issued ticket at 9:26am and was not called to be serviced until 12:40...actual interview only took 15-20 minutes)

- In cases where there are more clients remaining to be seen than available staff, clients are escorted to the conference room where copies are made of their documents and given to a supervisor to be processed at a later time.
  - This often results in the case temporarily being closed and re-opened at a later time where client will be issued all missing food stamps that they are qualified to receive.

With the increase of staff in TIPS43 this is supposed to decrease the number of clients that come in to the center for a face to face interview, however, most clients come in with the complaint that they never received their scheduled call from TIPS43 or they mailed in their application packet with all required documents and the case was never processed, as the documents were not scanned and indexed or received to be processed.

In this instance, the clients come in to complete the interview before the deadline causing an issue of overcrowding in the waiting area with the clients who are in the center for their scheduled appointment.

Additional staff is needed in this center and many others who may be dealing with the same types of issues. The process by which we are currently working under is unfair to both staff and clients and causes a backlog of work that never seems to get processed as we are required to service clients in the center first, leaving all those who have submitted documents left to wait and or forced to come back to the center to see why they have not received their monthly disbursement of food stamp benefits.

## TESTIMONY ATTACHMENT

### Medicaid Issues-staffing

1- Navigators contracted from the Exchange are not familiar with Medicaid so they either could not assist people Medicaid eligible or gave the wrong information. This meant that people were going to the HRA Medicaid sites for assistance in filing.

**(Note that Local 1549 advocated that HRA and other city agencies along with HHC should have applied and became eligible for federal funding for Navigators. This was not done.)** THERE ARE ALSO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EITHER WHO DO NOT OWN A COMPUTER OR ARE NOT COMPUTER LITERATE. IN SOME CASE LANGUAGE IS A BARRIER.

2- Estimates that we have heard concerning recertification backlogs number close to 1 million. There was not enough staff to keep up with the demand. **(Note that Local 1549 said that would be the case for the past few years)** HRA's plan for reducing the backlog are reasonable in that they are using employees currently on the Civil Service list for nine months in order to clear up the backlog. The only problem is that we believe there is not enough staff to handle the backlog and new cases. Currently all of our members report anywhere from 4 to 8 hours of overtime for them per week now. This includes working on Saturdays.

3- The more difficult "Surplus" cases are handled by Eligibility Staff. The numbers of these cases have dropped somewhat from the beginning (remember that the ACA is new and so there may be more applications initially) but there is no reason to think that these numbers will drop significantly since so many people either change their jobs or become unemployed. The recertification numbers should be expected to be significant in numbers.



**Testimony of the Hunger Action Network of New York State to the  
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget,  
Mayor's FY'14 Preliminary Management Report and Agency Oversight Hearings  
March 24, 2014**

My name is Mark Dunlea, I am Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of NYS (64 Fulton St., #801, NY NY 10038. 212 741-8192. [www.hungeractionnys.org](http://www.hungeractionnys.org).)

The Hunger Action Network of NYS is a statewide membership organization of direct food providers, advocates and other individuals whose goal is to end hunger and its root causes, including poverty, in NYS. Founded in 1982, we have had an office in NYC for more than two decades. We work to provide nutritious food to those who are hungry today while working on solutions to why people are hungry - lack of jobs; low pay; high rent, health care and utility bills; and lack of education and job training.

Hunger Action Network of NYS looks forward to working with Chairperson Stephen Levin and other City council members of the General Welfare Committee to reduce hunger and poverty in our city. We are also excited to welcome Steven Banks as Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration.

HRA needs to become part of the solution to hunger and poverty rather than part of the cause. There are many improvements in the operations and performance of HRA that we look forward to under Commissioner Banks - overhauling the welfare to work program to focus on helping people find jobs rather than denying people assistance; a willingness to comply with the law in providing benefits to eligible households; recognition of the role of education and training in improving employability; an end to the abuse of the sanctioning process. The federal government has consistently found that New York State has one of the least effective welfare to work efforts in the country, at least partially due to its obsessive and ill-founded reliance on workfare / wep.

We also need HRA to maximize its success in assisting individuals enroll in federal nutrition and public assistance programs (including cash assistance). It is estimated that more than half a million NYC residents eligible for SNAP benefits are not receiving them. Anti-hunger groups have a long list of administrative changes that we can share as to how to increase participation. However, many of the improvements needed in HRA are not budget items per se, so will not address them in detail in this testimony.

While most low-income New Yorkers will tell you what they want most is a living wage job, we need to also realize that many people who deal with HRA - especially children, the elderly and the disabled - are not going to be able to find full time employment. Thus we need to ensure that we have an adequate safety net in place for the most vulnerable members of our society.

**Increase Funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program**

We urge the Mayor and City Council to make ending hunger a major priority.

Anti-hunger groups support \$19.8M for EFAP OTPS (from \$11.7M) to scale up for food inflation, poverty & insufficiency of the emergency food supply

Since the recession started in 2007, the number of individuals using emergency food programs has approximately doubled. It is estimated that one in six NYC residents are food insecure. A recent survey by Hunger Action Network found that more than 2/3 of the programs have experienced a drop in food donations while almost all (89%) report an increase in demand. More than 20% of the guests are seniors, while more than a third are children and a third the working poor. In addition, the November 1 federal cuts in SNAP benefits reduce food assistance statewide by more than \$300 million - much of which is in NYC. The cuts were equivalent to the entire value of the food distributed by the nonprofit community.

We support the efforts of EFAP to provide food with higher nutritional value, and to buy from the local food economy.

### **Increase Funding for Transitional jobs**

Hunger Action Network supports a significant expansion of the number and location of transitional jobs for welfare participants and other unemployed New Yorkers.

We urge the City to use at least \$100 million of the \$425 million or so it receives from the State as a welfare block grant (FFFS, Flexible Fund for Family Services) to fund additional transitional jobs that combine a paycheck with job training and education. Statewide, much of these block grants ends up being used for fiscal relief, as welfare related programs previously funded with general funds get moved into the block grant, allowing the general revenue funds to be spent elsewhere.

Overall, more FFFS funding should be directed by NYC to meeting basic needs of welfare participants, such as increasing the shelter allowance and basic public assistance grant; effective job creation, through the expansion of transitional jobs and wage subsidies, and targeted education and job training programs.

12 years ago Hunger Action Network worked with anti-poverty organizations, municipal unions and city council members to pass a strong Transitional Jobs law. Though the Mayor's veto was overridden, the Courts allowed the Mayor to ignore the law. Eventually a smaller program was created, without many of the additional benefits included in the law. The program was further weakened, including a reduction in pay, in 2003. We would urge the Council to re-enact similar legislation. We support allowing some of the transitional jobs placements to be with nonprofits and labor organizations that provide essential community services.

We support the call by Community Voices Heard to eliminate unpaid wfp assignments from the city welfare to work programs.

Research on welfare-to-work programs has consistently shown that the most effective programs are those that adopt a "mixed strategy" — that is, programs that focus on employment but include significant use of education and training and other activities. Such programs are especially needed now that the majority of adults on welfare have multiple barriers to employment - a situation different than before federal welfare changes in 1996. Research on low-wage workers and on the job training programs suggests that programs will be more effective if: they target industries and occupations with relatively high earnings, employment growth, and opportunities for advancement; they are closely connected to employers to help TANF recipients gain access to better jobs than they could have gotten on their own; and caseworkers strive to match work activities and employment goals to individual recipients' strengths, barriers, and interests. In short, these programs succeed, in part, because they do not take a one-size-fits-all approach to assigning recipients to activities.

As a report by the Progressive Policy Institute (Transitional Jobs A Bridge Into the Workforce for Hard-to-Employ Welfare Recipients, <http://www.ndol.org/documents/TransitionalJobs.pdf>) notes, A paycheck is by far the best evidence that work pays. A critical advantages of wage-based transitional jobs is that they provide participants with an obvious and direct connection between work and wages. NY instead relies on workfare, which has drawn repeated complaints about "being make work", lack of training in marketable skills, and lack of assistance in landing "real" jobs. But perhaps the biggest criticism is that unpaid work experience fails to give participants a stake in success. Workfare is an end in itself and not a transition to something better. Under a workfare-type program, recipients aren't working to earn their grants but to prevent losing them



**Center for Children's Initiatives**  
*Building Bright Futures for Children*

**FOR THE RECORD**

**Testimony of Center for Children's Initiatives  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
&  
Committee on General Welfare**

**At the FY 2015 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Honorable Stephen Levin, Chair Committee on General Welfare  
Honorable Julissa Ferreras, Committee on Finance**

**Submitted by  
Betty Holcomb, Policy Director**

**March 24, 2014**

The Center for Children's Initiatives (CCI) has worked closely with the Council and this committee in particular for years to strengthen early care and learning services in the city. We appreciate the historic and longstanding support this council has shown for children's services, and look forward to working with Chair Levin and Members Palma, Cabrera, Wills, Richards, Gibson, Johnson, Menchaca and Torres. We know that this coming year holds both unprecedented opportunities and challenges for children's services, and especially for early care and learning services.

The Center for Children's Initiatives, formerly known as Child Care, Inc, champions the right of all children to start life with the best possible foundation of learning, care and health. As a child care resource and referral agency, we work with parents every day to find and secure the best possible options for their children. We also work with early childhood professionals, offering professional development and technical assistance to promote best practices. We serve as a resource to policymakers as well, offering our expertise and analysis to support investments that enhance quality, expand capacity and a systemic, sustainable approach to service delivery. CCI was a founding member of the Emergency Coalition to Save Child Care, and continues to participate in and support the Campaign for Children. CCI also works at the state and national level, co-chairing the statewide Winning BeginningNY coalition and is a state partner in the National Alliance for Early Success and works with the National Women's Law Center to advance federal and state investments and policies that promote high-quality early care and learning.

CCI also played a leading role in the launch of the state's Universal Prekindergarten program CCI continues to serve as a resource in UPK implementation, working closely with both early childhood and public education advocates. Our Executive Director Nancy Kolben is very proud to have been asked to be a member of the Pre K Implementation Work Group.

We applaud the Council for its strong support of the Mayor de Blasio's plan to expand Universal Prekindergarten and after-school services for middle school students, as well as the Council's strong support for city investments in child care and after-school services. We know that in the weeks ahead we will soon hear more about the outcome of state budget negotiations, and have a better picture of the resources available to move ahead in the coming year to strengthen and expand early care and learning services.

**CCI champions Pre-K expansion** and we believe that **it can serve as a critical building block for the city's efforts to build a systemic, coherent, high-quality system of early care and learning.** We know that reaching this goal will require strong coordination across city agencies. We are heartened that the Mayor has appointed anew deputy Mayor for Children's services and already enlisted experts and advocates in the early stages of plans for expanded capacity for Pre-K.

**Yet ACS still faces a fiscal crisis.** Even with the more than \$62 million baselined for this year, the agency still faces a deficit of \$92 million in its early childhood division. **There is significant capacity, both in centers and in family child care programs, that remains very fragile, both in the Early Learn program and in the Discretionary Sites.** We hear from parents every day, seeking subsidized care, and also eager to know if their current programs will still be assured of funding in the coming year.

- Given the need for parents to be ensured of places for the 2014-2015 year, and the need for organizations to plan adequately for the year, we agree with the Campaign for Children and other advocates who suggest **a "modified" procurement process which would be announced ASAP to extend current contracts through the 2015 fiscal year and which would allow for the development of a longer-term contracting process for fiscal year 2016 and beyond.**
- As UPK is fully implemented, **the City should ensure that proper funds are allocated for aging down the system to serve more, younger children.** Assuming significant increases in funding for UPK eligible children and a maintenance of other current funding allocated for early childhood programs, ACS should develop a viable strategy for providing spaces for infants and toddlers (ages 6 months -2 years. As you know, programming for this age group will require additional resources to meet staffing requirements, physical improvements at some sites, and more sophisticated family recruitment strategies.
- **The City should move towards establishing salary equity for teachers and other staff.** To attract and keep the required credentialed staff for quality programming, organizations (and schools too) must be able to offer appropriate competitive compensation and benefits. In addition to staff salaries, sufficient funds must be available for staff development and training, the expedited capital resources required to both create new spaces and to maintain existing spaces, and the required levels of administrative support (including covering expenses for insurance, IT and HR obligations, etc.) We are heartened that the Mayor's plan, Ready to Launch, includes strategies to move to salary equity in UPK programs, an important step forward.

### **Pre-K as a building block and engine for change**

CCI's has long advocated for Pre-K expansion as an building block for creating a more systemic approach to early care and learning. Pre-K funding has particular benefits for families and children, as a part of public education, **free and open to all children, Pre-K also stands out as a service that expands access for immigrant children and families.** Pre-k also includes a mandate for inclusion of community-based programs in the implementation, which creates the potential to align teaching and learning from the earliest years right through school age. It also offers the opportunity to leverage capacity, funding and expertise through its community partnerships.

Today, with over 58,000 four-year-olds enrolled in Pre-K in the city, with 60% of them in community-based settings. A third of them in full-day Pre-K seats, the city is well-positioned to carry out the plan, issued in January, "Ready to Launch." The city's subsequent Progress Report identified potential capacity to serve an additional 29,000 children

across the city. This data is currently under review and evaluation as city agencies review the proposals and their potential.

We know that DOE, ACS, DOH and HRA have developed stronger working relationships in recent years, especially in regard to coordinating and making the most of Pre-K expansion funding. The new opportunity to integrate full-day Pre-K funding into Early Learn and Discretionary Site programs creates new challenges and offers new opportunities for stronger coordination to better meet the needs of the city's families and children. It is essential that the new funding be used to expand, strengthen and improve early learning opportunities for young children, birth to five. It is also essential that the new investment be used as a vehicle and opportunity to protect capacity to serve children and quickly stand up new sites. This includes a strategic plan to address the situation at direct lease sites and at NYCHA, to ensure the city makes the most of existing capacity already designed for early care and learning services and sited in neighborhoods with the most vulnerable children and families.

CCI also has a long history of working on all aspects of implementation, from facilities to workforce development to professional development and costing out. We also have an active parent consultation service and experience and expertise in helping parents understand their options and arrive at the best choice for their children. We are eager to serve as a resource to the Council, and especially to this committee, to work on all aspects of meeting the goals of the Pre-K expansion – and to make sure that the expansion supplements and enriches other early childhood services. There is much to build on, but also much complexity. We stand ready as a resource to help in any way we can.

CCI is pleased that the Mayor has also put strong new leadership into his administration. The new deputy Mayor has a strong portfolio that focuses on strategic priorities including Universal Pre K and after school for middle school children as well as other children's services. We agree with the City administration that our city has a strong basis to build on and that our city – in partnership with schools, early childhood programs in the communities and families is well-positioned to move forward at a rapid pace. We have a wealth of expertise and capacity, and with new resources, we believe that more programs will come forward.

CCI hears daily from parents about the challenges that they face in finding affordable early learning opportunities and we know that Pre-K is an important option for those families. We also work to support programs across the city in meeting the highest quality standards. CCI staff and Board fully support the City Council resolution and stand ready to invest our time and expertise in making this a reality.



### **PINE STREET DAY CARE CENTER**

374 Pine Street, Brooklyn, NY 11208

Tel 718-235-1150 • Fax 718-235-5194

Linda Bunch, Director

**CITY COUNCIL GENERAL WELFARE COMMITTEE HEARING  
PUBLIC TESTIMONY  
LINDA BUNCH, DIRECTOR  
PINE STREET DAY CARE CENTER  
MARCH 24, 2014**

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Chairperson Levin, Members of the Council,

My name is Linda Bunch. I am the Director of the Pine Street Day Care Center, sponsored by Colony-South Brooklyn Houses. The Center is located at 374 Pine Street in the East New York section of Brooklyn.

The Center has been in operation in the neighborhood since 1974. Through all these years, it has been a solid, reliable presence in the community which parents have been able to rely on for quality child care. Pine Street also has Universal Prekindergarten classrooms.

Since October of 2012, the Center has been funded by Discretionary Funds, allocated by the Council. We are enormously grateful for this funding and especially thank our Council Members Charles Barron and now Inez Barron for their past and present support. The Discretionary Funding has allowed us to operate, serve children, their families and keep a staff of 15 employed. The people we serve are income-eligible and include new immigrants as well as long-time residents.

At this time, I am asking the Council to ensure that a portion of Discretionary Funding, which was baselined at the end of the last administration, be allocated as before to Pine Street.

I would like to share with the Council some of the stories that point to Pine Street's success.

Some of our youngsters live in very stable home situations where parents need our facility so that they can work and go to school. Other children are not so fortunate. One of the items that makes Pine Street unique is our bus service which transports youngsters to and from the City transitional housing sites in which they live to Pine Street each day. The Center becomes an island of stability for one of the City's most vulnerable populations.

Our Foster Grandparent Program benefits both sides. Our children develop bonds with a single person who is interested in them individually. The child can share his or her activities with a caring adult, perhaps missing their own grandchildren, who gives the child undivided, one-on-one attention. This may not be possible in their own home.

One of the most wonderful things to see is the socialization process that takes place at Pine Street. Children become more confident, they learn how to feed themselves, to share and interact with their peers and adults.

Children who may have speech or behavioral problems are evaluated and receive therapy by specialists on site. We are fortunate to have a well-maintained facility with spaces for the on-site therapies to occur, thereby causing less disruption to the child and greater convenience for the parents.

Once again, I am asking the Council to allocate these funds to Pine Street. Without them, the hard working people in need and the vulnerable children we serve will be without options, because we know from experience that once closed, centers are not replaced.

Thank you for your assistance. We are counting on you to help us continue at Pine Street.



CITY COUNCIL GENERAL WELFARE COMMITTEE HEARING  
PUBLIC TESTIMONY  
BY ALICE B. OWENS, PRESIDENT  
COLONY-SOUTH BROOKLYN HOUSES, INC.  
MARCH 24, 2014

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Chairperson Levin, Members of the Council,

My name is Alice Owens. I am the President of Colony-South Brooklyn Houses, a social service organization in Brooklyn founded in 1904.

I have testified at City Council Hearings before in the wake of EarlyLearn. Through the heroic efforts of the Council, Colony is able to operate six sites using Discretionary Funding. I am here today to ask that a portion of the Discretionary Funds, that were baselined at the end of last year, be awarded to the Colony programs that currently have Discretionary Funding. Clearly, without that funding, our programs will have to close, parents will be without reliable child care, which will affect their ability to hold jobs and go to school, vulnerable children will be without quality programming and credentialed, caring staff will be unemployed.

The Centers Colony operates that need Discretionary allocations are located in East New York, Williamsburg and Sunset Park - all communities that have a high concentration of need as defined by the Administration for Children's Services. Private day care is not an option and informal child care arrangements do not have the reliability or provide the learning experiences that these families require. No one disputes the positive impact that early childhood programs have. Children learn to relate to other children, to settle disputes in a safe and practical way, to play and to exercise their fine and gross motor skills, to respect other people, to practice tolerance and to learn that conflicts can be settled without violence.

Without Colony's Centers or Provider Mother Homes, parents can easily become unemployed. Whatever economic improvements have occurred, they are not robust; jobs are scarce. Our parents, no matter how hardworking, are economically fragile. They are sometimes only a paycheck away from being homeless or unable to put food on the table.



Our experiences as Discretionary Centers have been overwhelmingly positive. We meet all Health Department requirements. Our landlords are very supportive. We have worked closely with the Professional Development Institute at CUNY to strengthen our programs and plan for a sustainable future.

I want to make very clear that our Centers are learning experiences; they use nationally recognized curriculums and have Universal Prekindergarten classes. Staff is appropriately credentialed. Meals meet the strict nutrition standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Thank you on behalf of the agency, the children, parents and staff for the Discretionary Funding. We ask that it be continued.



**Testimony of Joel Berg, Executive Director  
New York City Coalition against Hunger**

**Before The New York City Council General Welfare Committee**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing - General Welfare**

**March 24, 2014**

I am Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. I am testifying on behalf of the city's more than 1,100 soup kitchens and food pantries – and the more than 1.3 million New Yorkers who live in households that can't afford enough food. I want to first thank Chairman Levin for his work on behalf of people in need as well as to the Committee for allowing me to testify here today.

**Hunger in New York City**

Food insecurity and hunger remain high throughout New York City, with one in six city residents and one in five children living in homes that couldn't afford enough food in the 2010-2012 time period. These levels are essentially unchanged, staying at the same high level since the start of the recession in 2008.

Statewide in New York, one in eight residents suffered food insecurity in 2010-2012, representing a 40 percent jump from the 2000-2002 time period.

New York City's food pantries and soup kitchens faced an increased demand of 10 percent in 2013, on top of increases of 5 percent in 2012, 12 percent in 2011, 7 percent in 2010, and 29 percent in 2009. Yet 56.8 percent of these agencies suffered from cuts in combined government and private resources, compared to only 10.87 percent that benefitted from increased resources in 2013.

Over 2010 and 2011, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average surged by more than 1,000 points, the number of people in poverty in New York City increased by more than 100,000 people. The recent success of big business is simply not translating into the creation of living-wage jobs. In 2011 alone, there was a more than 70,000 person increase in poverty at a time when the poverty rate nationwide was essentially flat. In 2011, there were more than 1.7 million New Yorkers living below the federal poverty line, making less than \$17,916 annually for a family of three.

The number of poor people in New York City is now greater than the entire population of Philadelphia and could fill Madison Square Garden, or the new Barclay's Arena, more than 85 times.

As *The New York Times* reported in 2011, "The rich got richer and the poor got poorer in New York City last year as the poverty rate reached its highest point in more than a decade, and the income gap in Manhattan, already wider than almost anywhere else in the country, rivaled disparities in sub-Saharan Africa...Median household income in the city last year was \$49,461, just below the national median and down \$821 from the year before (compared with a national decline of \$642). Median earnings for workers fell sharply to \$32,210 from \$33,287 — much more than the national decline."

Just how vast is this gap? There are now over 53 billionaires in New York City alone. The collective private net worth of New York City's 53 wealthiest billionaires rose from \$200 billion in 2010 to \$211 billion in 2011 to \$231.5 billion in 2012, according to *Forbes*. That's a 16 percent jump in wealth over just three years, at a time when the income for average New York City families sank and poverty soared.

Most people cannot fully grasp what a figure such as \$231.5 billion actually means. That's almost four times the size of the entire budget of the City of New York, which pays for the police and fire departments, public schools, water system, social services, parks, public health measures, etc. for a city of more than eight million people. The \$231.5 billion combined private net worth of these New York City billionaires now equals the annual household income of 4.6 million average New York City families. Even more outrageous, the wealth held by these 53 people is 15 million times the annual salary of someone working full-time at minimum wage for a year, meaning that the average billionaire in New York City has as much money as 289,650 minimum wage workers.

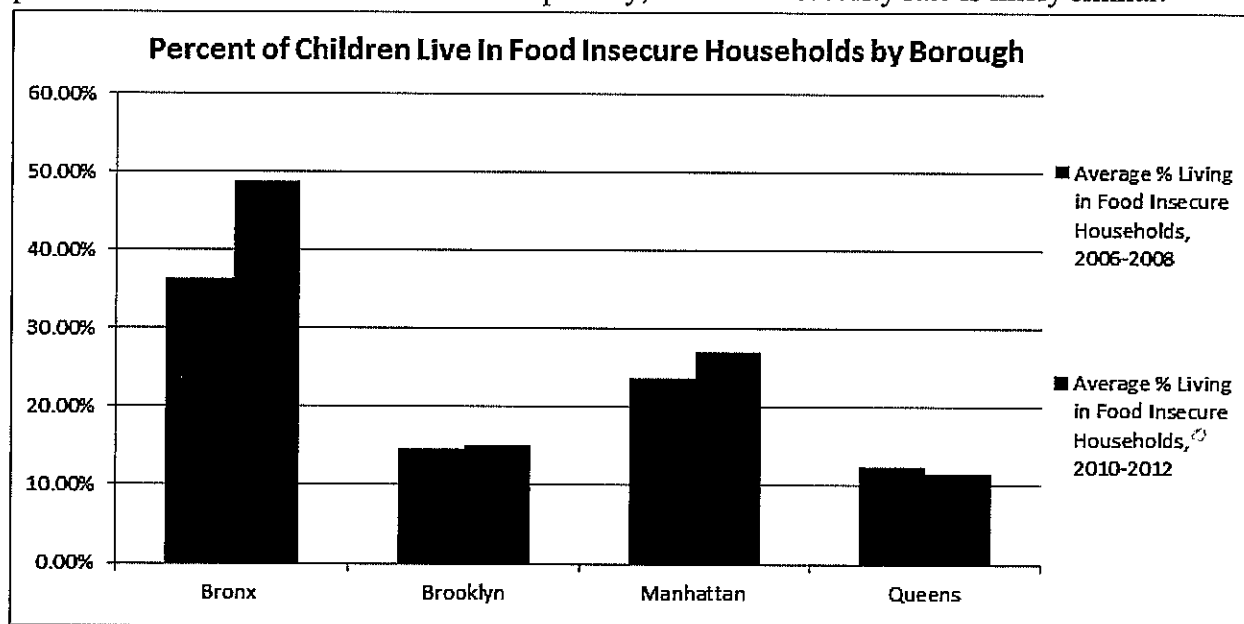
Given that poverty, unemployment and under-employment are the main causes of domestic food insecurity and hunger, it is no surprise that hunger and food insecurity soared citywide even before Superstorm Sandy, and have likely surged since then, according to data collected and compiled by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. Before the storm, more than 1.3 million New Yorkers — one in six — lived in households without enough food, determined by the federal government to be food insecure, a new record high since the federal government started formally measuring the problem in 1997. One in four of the city's children — nearly half a million — lived in households that lacked sufficient food. One in 10 seniors struggled against hunger.

### **One in Five New York City Children — Nearly Half a Million — Live in Food Insecure Homes**

In 2010-2012, and estimated average of 406,260 children in New York City lived in food insecure households that did not have an adequate food supply throughout the year. This number represents 21.85 percent, or one in five of the city's child population. It also represents a 10 percent increase from 2006-2008, when an estimated 369,415 New York City children lived in food insecure homes.

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Percent of Children in Food Insecure Homes (2006-08)</b>	<b>Percent of Children in Food Insecure Homes (2010-2012)</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
Bronx	36.47	48.91	+ 44%
Brooklyn	14.54	15.01	+ 3%
Manhattan	23.75	27.13	+ 14%
Queens	12.45	11.58	- 7%

\* In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percent of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for child food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate a borough- specific child food insecurity rate for Staten Island. In 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 14.6 percent of Staten Island children lived in poverty; the food insecurity rate is likely similar.

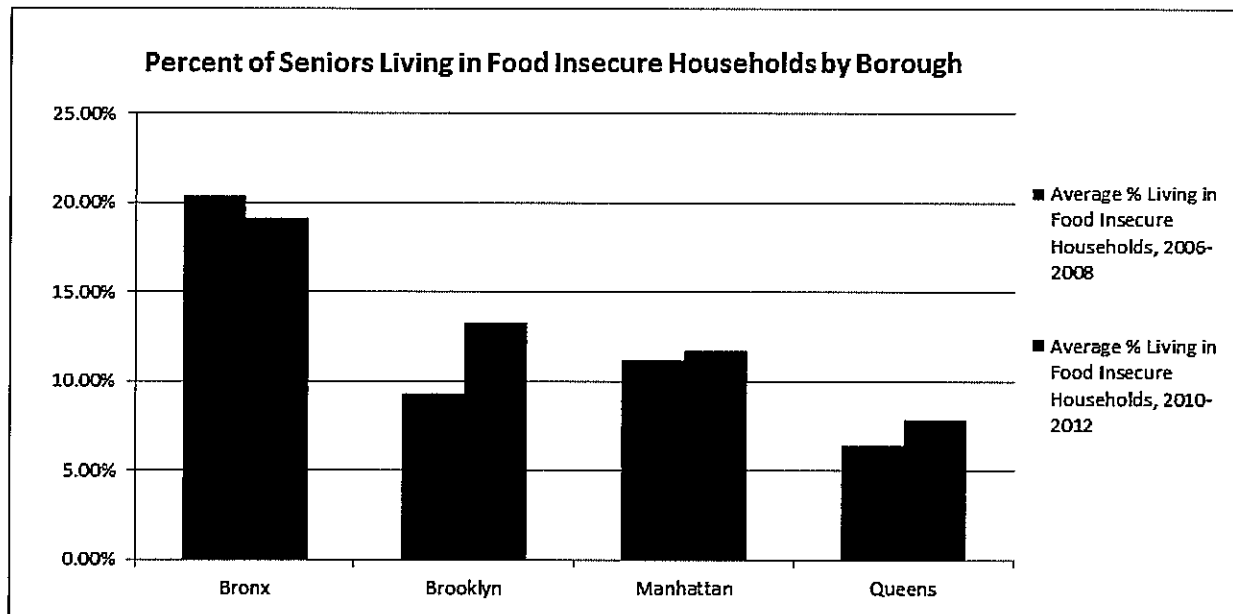


### **One in 10 New York City Seniors (Over the age of 60) Live in Food Insecure Households**

In 2010-2012 there were an estimated 175,851 food insecure seniors over the age of 60 in the city. This number represents 11.5 percent, or one in 10 of the city's senior population. It also represents a 33 percent increase from 2006-2008, when an estimated 132,113 New York City seniors lived in food insecure homes.

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Percent of Food Insecure Seniors (2006-08)</b>	<b>Percent of Food Insecure Seniors (2010-2012)</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
Bronx	20.38	19.16	- 6%
Brooklyn	9.26	13.27	+ 4%
Manhattan	11.17	11.76	- 5%
Queens	6.4	7.86	+ 23%

\* In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percent of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate food security rates. According to U.S. Census data, Staten Island had a poverty rate of 11.6 for the years of 2011-2012; the food insecurity rate is likely similar.



### **Adding Insult to Injury - Cuts to the Safety Net**

Making matters even worse, federal nutrition assistance programs are suffering from the worst attack in decades.

The city's food pantries and soup kitchens faced particularly severe cuts in funding through the federal FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), which suffered both long-term, multi-year budget cuts as well as more recent budget cuts as a result of sequestration.

Sequestration also slashed funding for the nutrition assistance that pregnant women and infants get from the WIC program and that seniors receive through meals-on-wheels. Although sequestration has ended, the long-term harm remains.

Incredibly, 1.8 million New York City residents who rely on SNAP (formerly food stamps) lost some of their already meager benefits on November 1, 2013. The average family of three lost \$29 per month, more than 20 meals monthly. As a result, the city's economy will lose more than \$200 million in federal aid in the next year. But averages don't tell the whole story. I met a woman who was putting herself through CUNY while raising two children who lost \$45 per month.

*On top of all that*, Congress passed a Farm Bills further slashing SNAP by *another* \$8.6 billion. Insane. Immoral. Thank goodness Governor Andrew Cuomo took administrative action to prevent this cut from going into effect in New York State this year, but the threat remains for future years.

Low-income New Yorkers have been facing one of the toughest winters ever this year, and it's just not because of the weather. Far too many New Yorkers will have to make the difficult decision between buying groceries or covering basic living expenses.

On top of that, Washington allowed long-term unemployment insurance to expire, making the situation even worse.

### **Access to Assistance in NYC**

While there were 1.87 million recipients of SNAP in New York City last year, according to our estimations, there were at least 500,000 people, and perhaps up to 600,000 eligible New Yorkers, not receiving SNAP. While we recognize that this prediction is difficult to be precise, we are also aware that there is a gap in the number of Public Assistance recipients and those who receive SNAP even according to HRA's own fact sheets, which means that HRA must do a more effective job at outreach.<sup>1</sup>

HRA recently posted their caseload data for January, 2014, and it shows a 16,802 person net drop in the SNAP/food stamps caseload during the first month of the de Blasio Administration. On top of a large drop in December, 2013, and in other recent months, this means that a startling 76,493 fewer people in New York City are now accessing this vital federal nutrition assistance than 13 months ago.

If the caseload was decreasing primarily because the economy was improving and hunger was declining, we would cheer the decline, but as you know, that's just not the case. Even HRA's own statistics show that the people going to food pantries and soup kitchens has continued to increase. Between the period of April-June 2012 and the same period in 2013 there was a 3 percent change, which means that 74,309 more people were accessing emergency food assistance programs.

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<sup>1</sup> HRA/ DSS Fact Sheet: NYC Human Resources Administration, Department of Social Services  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/facts/hra\\_facts/hrafacts\\_2014/hra\\_facts\\_2014\\_01.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/facts/hra_facts/hrafacts_2014/hra_facts_2014_01.pdf)

Poverty has not decreased and the shelter population is still sky-high. Unemployment benefits have run out. There is no doubt in my mind that the main reason for the declining caseload is that HRA still imposes a wide variety of access barriers. Particularly given that the Mayor has, rightfully, placed a high priority on getting Albany to allow the city to collect more revenues from the wealthiest, it is particularly ironic that the city is willfully turning away hundreds of millions of federal dollars yearly that should be going to feed hungry families and aid our local food economy.

We can't be positive of all the exact causes of the drop without seeing more data from HRA. (During the previous administration, HRA strictly limited the data they gave to advocates and service providers). Still, the following continuing problems at HRA are likely the main causes of the drop:

- 1) Failing to properly re-certify households which continue to be eligible for SNAP.
- 2) Losing documents and forcing applicants to re-submit applications.
- 3) Failing to process new applications in a timely manner.
- 4) Sanctioning and removing from the rolls able-bodied adults unable to find work.
- 5) Limiting the ability of community-based partners to submit electronic applications.
- 6) Failing to provide sufficient numbers of translators and application materials in varied languages.
- 7) Generally sending a message to the public and to HRA staff that new applicants are not particularly welcome.

### **Helping New Yorkers by Overhauling the Human Resources Administration (HRA)**

We must ensure an adequate nutrition assistance safety net and boost upward mobility through expanded access to SNAP, school breakfast, WIC, and summer meals benefits that makes robust benefits available, free of stigma and hassle, for those in need.

Currently, to obtain the multiple benefits for which they are eligible, low-income individuals must often submit multiple applications, submit multiple sets of supporting documents, and visit multiple city offices, losing significant time and money. We should enable all eligible people to obtain all benefits for which they are eligible through one single, easy-to-complete application, available online, in paper form, and by phone.

City-imposed barriers to access deprive more than half a million eligible, low-income New Yorkers – many of whom are working people – from receiving SNAP (formerly food stamp) benefits, thereby increasing hunger and depriving the city's economy of over one billion federal dollars. Mayor de Blasio should launch a comprehensive effort to increase the number of eligible families – and particularly working families – who receive SNAP benefits. Through this effort, participation rates could be increased to 90 percent by the end of the next Mayoral term.

We are extraordinarily encouraged by the appointment of Steven Banks, a long-term fighter for the most vulnerable, as the new HRA Commissioner, and we look forward to working with the new HRA leadership team as true partners in change. We are hopeful that he will soon begin implementing Mayor de Blasio's HRA-related campaign pledges, including increasing access to benefits offices, simplifying the application process, applying for all federal and state initiatives, increasing outreach, expanding the Paperless Office Program (POS), working with community-based organizations, providing clear and consistent guidance and training to caseworkers and other benefits workers regarding federal and state program policy with respect to immigrant, non-English-speaking, and disabled applicants, assisting non-literate parents on ways to apply for benefits for their citizen children and working with OTDA to allow students at four-year colleges to receive TANF. We hope that Mr. Banks also works closely with NYC DoITT and OTDA to start upgrading and integrating online application and case management systems. We suggest that he implement a HRA-wide client/consumer service plan and begin dramatically overhauling all job training, readiness, and placement activities.

We also firmly support plans to give SNAP and other public benefits recipients the tools they need to move into - and remain in - the middle class. Ideas include enabling low-income people and families to sign individualized agreements with the city to create and implement long-term action plans for them to work collaboratively with city government and non-profit social service providers to earn, learn, work, and save better in order to ensure greater economic opportunity for themselves and their children. The plans could also include specific nutrition, fitness, and health goals.

We encourage a revamping or replacement of the Work Experience Program (WEP) with job training programs that provide living wage, career-ladder jobs. As part of that effort, we encourage the city to launch a comprehensive Good Food, Good Jobs initiative. In partnership with the federal and state governments, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, this new city initiative could bolster employment, foster economic growth, fight hunger, cut obesity, improve nutrition, and reduce spending on diet-related health problems by bringing healthier food into low-income neighborhoods and creating jobs. By doing so, not only could this effort enable the city to help solve a number of very tangible problems, but it could also fuse Mayor de Blasio's interest in advancing Mayor Bloomberg's public health legacy with his interest in making much more progress creating jobs and fighting poverty. Additionally, we encourage support and funding for proven programs that include Community Colleges and CUNYs, apprenticeships, and transitional jobs programs that will provide a pathway to successful entry and retention of living wage jobs.

### **Need for Adequate Funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program**

Food pantries and soup kitchens never could – and never should – be seen as a replacement for living wages jobs and an adequate safety net. Yet because they fill in key gaps in our employment and social service programs, it is vital they have the resources they need. Therefore, we join with our colleagues in requesting that HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFA) have its budget increased \$19.8 million, from the current level of \$11.7 million, to help make up for years of flat funding despite soaring need. The Food Bank of New York City has indicated that doing so would help the program to scale up for food inflation, rising poverty, and insufficiency of the emergency food supply (which leaves the average pantry bag with only 5.8 of the 9 meals it's supposed to contain).



### **Need for Universal Pre-K and Universal School Breakfast Before the Bell**

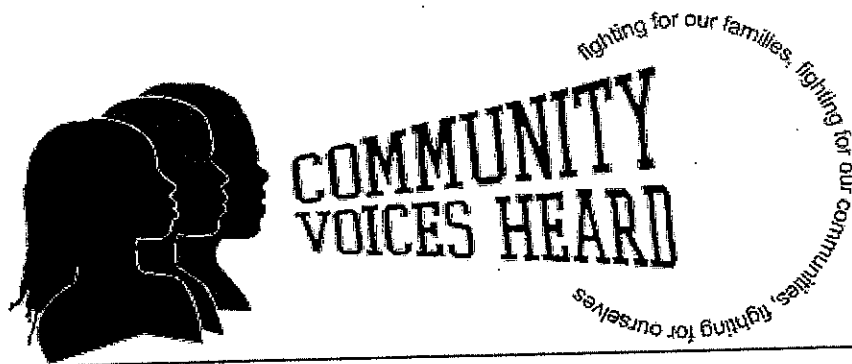
While universal pre-k and universal school breakfast before the bell are not under the direct jurisdiction of HRA, I think it is important to note in this and every other forum that ensuring that all New York City children have access to free meals during pre-k and a breakfast at school would significantly reduce hunger in the city.

I also note that still one more benefit of ensuring that all eligible families receive SNAP is that, due to direct certification, families that receive SNAP will also have their children automatically eligible for free school meals, which both reduces child hunger and increases federal reimbursements to our schools.

### **Conclusion**

Recently, many of you have heard it repeated that 50 years ago Lyndon Johnson began a 'War on Poverty'. We dramatically reduced poverty then through a concerted, comprehensive effort to do so. We believe that the most effective method of solving hunger is through effective government intervention. New York has, in the past, been a model to other cities for progressive policy change. We must serve as that model once again by leading the way in changing the way we treat those in need. We can do this. More than 1.3 million food insecure New Yorkers are counting on us.

Thank you.



[www.CVHaction.org](http://www.CVHaction.org)

**Public Hearing on Executive Budget Fiscal 2014**  
**Testimony**

Good afternoon, Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Finance Committee and all Council Members of New York City. My name is John Medina, I am a Board member of Community Voices Heard and I would like the Council to eliminate Work Experience Program (WEP) completely.

This program does not provide real work experience skills that lead to permanent employment instead the program keeps participants in perpetual poverty. Eliminating WEP and replacing it with Transitional Jobs would provide families on Public Assistance with a paycheck and a path out of poverty while restoring self respect.

Currently Community Voices Heard has a Bill in Albany to eliminate (WEP) introduced by Keith Wright in the Assembly & Senator Diane Savino in the Senate. The Bill in Albany has gained major support by Assembly members except for the Chairperson of Social Services Michele Titus due to insufficient time to review the Bill as stated by her even though Community Voices Heard members have brought the Bill to her attention for over a year in person.

I am a decorated soldier with a medical condition and was assigned to perform (WEP) because I receive Food Stamps. Each week I reported to the Carver Senior Center to process SCRIE, file income taxes, and answer phones the same work as the case worker, but she gets paid and I didn't. I didn't receive earned income tax credit, no social security credit and most of all no paycheck for my Labor. It should not be a crime to need help from Social Services and then be forced to do Free Labor just for being poor.

The Job Training Programs should be expanded to other Agencies such as: Metropolitan Transit Authority, the Sanitation Department, The Department of Aging, El Museo Del Barrio and Department of Citywide Administrative Services. This needs to be considered during the Budget process. Sanitation is already suggested funding to hire more WEP Supervisors.

I humbly request the City Council members to sign on in support of the Bill and pass a resolution to eliminate (WEP) on a city level.

Thank you.

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Center Against Domestic Violence- RAPP Program  
Sabrina Gonzalez  
March 24, 2014

Good Afternoon, City Council,

I would like to begin by saying thank you for having me come here today. My name is Sabrina Gonzalez and I am an 11th grader at Manhattan Theatre Lab High School. I have been in the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program, RAPP, since it came to my school last year and it's been a wonderful experience. I've taken advantage of the counseling services RAPP offers, to understand and deal with a difficult situation that has affected my family. By participating in RAPP, I have learned a great deal about myself in the process.

Additionally, I have become an active RAPP peer leader, going on fun educational trips and doing a lot of community service. Honestly, I have fallen deeply in love with the program. There are no words to express the gratitude I feel in my heart. The RAPP program has been a voice for those who have seem to have felt mute when they couldn't find their voice. It's amazing how the RAPP program makes every day so special. Ever since I joined RAPP, it has been my life, my heart, my soul. The RAPP room is a place where we feel as one can relate to each other and share our own experiences. It has brought together my fellow students in my school, the people who I now call my best friends.

The RAPP program has made my life so much better. Before RAPP, I never knew there are so many things you could do to put a smile on someone's face and make them happy. The RAPP program has made me a better as a person. From serving food to the needy and bringing meals to the elderly, to sending a happy birthday message to an 11 year old boy with a disability who struggles to make friends, I believe, RAPP is standing up for all that's right. The RAPP program over all has been a life changing experience. If I could sum it all up, I would love this

program to be in all schools, so all students can experience the love of RAPP! Thank you for allowing me to come here today. Simply put, I LOVE THE RAPP PROGRAM!

Center Against Domestic Violence- RAPP Program  
Aaliyah Acevedo  
March 24, 2014

Hello City Council Members,

My name is Aaliyah Acevado and I am a junior at Manhattan Theatre Lab High School. I've been in the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program, RAPP, since it came to my high school last year. Since joining RAPP, I have changed so much. Before RAPP, I was barely coming to school and was one year behind academically. Since Manhattan Theatre Lab High School is phasing out, I didn't think I could graduate with my class and would have to transfer to an alternative school.

However, this all changed once I joined RAPP. I started meeting with the RAPP counselor and talking about personal issues I was having both in school and out. It has helped me become more self aware and more capable of handing difficult situations. It has also helped me focus on improving my school work. The RAPP counselor and I filled out a "grade contract" so that I could see what areas I would have to improve in and gave me suggestions on how to improve my grades. Slowly, over this year, I have begun to see myself as a better student. Overall, with the help of the RAPP program, I have been working accomplishing most of my goals and get through personal things.

I have had many laughs and good times with the RAPP peer leaders and I've participated in so many different activities. I have been trained to help other students going through difficult relationships. I have handed out water and positive wishes to thousands of walkers at the Breast Cancer walk, I have played with children at a Domestic Violence Shelter and had wonderful conversations with senior citizens while serving them a hot lunch.

I do believe if it wasn't for RAPP, I wouldn't be up here today. I never thought I would be in a program that gives so much love and support. In RAPP, I not only feel supported by the other students but also give the same support back to others. I have learned the power of having a positive attitude, even when facing something I don't want to deal with. And although, I'm not as physically tall or strong as other people around me, my voice is strong and loud. I am a confident young adult and know I can be successful.

Looking back, this last school year, RAPP, has helped me become a leader in many ways. It has taught me a very strong word, RESPECT, both how to give it and receive it. It has also taught me responsibility, compassion, patience, and above anything else the real meaning of FAMILY.

I am extremely happy to report that I am doing MUCH better in school. By passing all my classes, attending PM school, Saturday school and summer school, I am making up the credits I am missing. I am scheduled to enter my senior year in Sept. and graduate on time, in June 2015. After graduation, I plan on attending college. Thank you.

Center Against Domestic Violence- RAPP Program  
Jonathan Tagoe  
March 24, 2014

Hello Council Members,

My name is Jonathan Tagoe and I am a senior at Manhattan Theatre Lab High School. I am grateful for the opportunity to stand in front of you and speak about a wonderful program, Relationship Abuse Prevention Program, RAPP. Since joining this anti-violence, peer leadership program, RAPP, at my high school, I have grown a lot.

RAPP is more than a program; it is a "family". Through conversation with my RAPP coordinator, I have learned a lot about myself. RAPP has been a support system for me in dealing with personal issues with my family. Additionally, as a group, the RAPP students have an opportunity to participate in many community building activities that have helped build up my confidence and self-esteem. I believe that a strength I have is connecting to others and through RAPP, I have learned how to effectively be supportive and make a person realize they're not alone during difficult situations

Last summer, I was selected to work in the RAPP summer peer leadership program, where we were trained to help others going through dating violence. Since, I am someone who believes in compromise, a sometimes challenging idea with teenagers, I learned many effective ways to help others who are having a conflict. I have learned that in order to be a good mediator, one has to help those involved see the perspective of the other person.

During the summer a number of speakers came to RAPP. On one visit by a spoken word poet, I learned about the value of communication and words, to use them as a tool to express myself effectively. When a woman who was visually impaired spoke, I was shocked by her courage to be so honest and loved her independence. And when a speaker spoke about his experiences being transgendered, it made me value and appreciate the notion of respect for others. It reinforced my ideas, that everyone deserves respect regardless of our differences.

Additionally, RAPP has given me the opportunities to participate in many community service activities and to give back to the community. Giving back to others and helping those in need has been a wonderful experience that makes me feel good. I have helped cheer people on at the Breast Cancer walk, help serve food to the needy in a soup kitchen, spend time talking with the elderly and played games with young children who witnessed domestic violence

I am proud to say that I am graduating high school, one year early, and I am excited to start college in September, where I wish to study psychology and music. My RAPP coordinator and I applied to many colleges and I am impatiently waiting to hear from the schools. I believe I am on my way to becoming the good leader I know I can be and feel that my experiences in RAPP will help me in the future. Thank you.



Judith Kahan  
Center Against Domestic Violence  
Chief Executive Officer

Testimony to the  
General Welfare Committee  
New York City Council  
March 24, 2014

Good Afternoon -

My name is Judith Kahan and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Center Against Domestic Violence.

Since 1976, the Center has been working toward a society free from violence by transforming the lives of victims and raising awareness in our communities.

The Center, the largest of the City's Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program – or RAPP – providers, offers this program to nearly 30,000 students on fifteen high school and intermediate school campuses in all five boroughs of New York City. In every school, RAPP delivers workshops about healthy relationships, one-on-one counseling and support groups, peer leadership activities, staff education, parent education and community workshops. Often the master's level social worker who coordinates RAPP is the only adult a teen can turn to.

For ten years, HRA and the Mayor supported RAPP; since 2010, those of us who provide the program and those who benefit from this groundbreaking program, have come to you, the City Council to save this citywide social work program that serves fifty eight schools on thirty campuses with almost 50,000 students. And you have saved this program! We thank you for your faith in what we do and your dedication to the youth of New York City.

This year the outgoing Mayor and the incoming Mayor have included RAPP in the budget, and HRA will make it whole. But the program they are restoring

is the 2006 RAPP program. It is great to reach and help as many students as we have, but there are so many more students in New York City. RAPP is only a drop in the bucket changing the school culture to one of respect in a comparative handful of schools

RAPP is recognized throughout the country as a model program to stop teen relationship abuse. This proven program helps young people stay in school and develop the tools for self-sufficiency. RAPP Coordinators not only teach students about healthy relationships and how to avoid or end abusive relationships, they assist them to graduate, to go on to college, and to believe in themselves. Students who might otherwise have dropped out of school because of the abuse and violence in their lives can now graduate and go on to two or four year colleges – because of RAPP.

Every time I meet RAPP graduates, their stories touch my heart. They have overcome the odds to become heroes, sharing their experiences so that others will not have to live through them. Please support an expansion of this valuable program and give more teens hope for a better future.

Thank you.

Judith Kahan

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Testimony prepared by

**Triada Stampas**

for the

**Committee on General Welfare**

on the

**Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget**

**March 24, 2014**

on behalf of

**Food Bank For New York City**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Triada Stampas and I am the Senior Director of Government Relations at Food Bank For New York City. Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council about the Preliminary Budget for the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) for Fiscal Year 2015.

First, Food Bank For New York City thanks you and your colleagues for your continued attentiveness to the issue of hunger in New York City – particularly in the face of threats to federal nutrition assistance programs in Congress over the past several years – and for your ongoing efforts to ensure all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food. The City Council's consistent support for increasing enrollment of eligible households in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and expanding the in-classroom School Breakfast Program, as well as funding to expand the supply of food available at emergency food

programs are especially appreciated and needed as the recession has left elevated levels of food poverty that nearly five years of economic recovery have yet to bring down.

Food Bank For New York City works to end hunger and food poverty by increasing access to nutrition, education and financial empowerment. Approximately 1.5 million New York City residents rely on our programs and services. We distribute food and provide support services to a network of approximately 1,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools citywide; manage nutrition education programs for schools and CBOs; operate income support programs including SNAP outreach & enrollment assistance and one of the largest Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs in the country; and conduct research to inform community and government efforts to end hunger in New York City.

Our city approaches the coming fiscal year having seen an across-the-board reduction to SNAP benefits this past November – a cut that took away millions of meals from low-income families across the five boroughs. With indicators of need in New York – including poverty, food insecurity and unemployment – remaining entrenched at high levels since the start of the recession, emergency food providers across the city were already struggling to meet this need. While the federal Farm Bill enacted last month included an increase to the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), it is far from sufficient to compensate for the meals lost due to SNAP cuts.

Protecting and strengthening our city's anti-hunger resources remains an urgent necessity. *Every New Yorker*, old or young, must have access to affordable, nutritious food if our city is to thrive – and in order to do so, the resources offered in HRA's Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget must be equal to the challenge.

## **DESPITE ECONOMIC RECOVERY, NEED HAS GROWN**

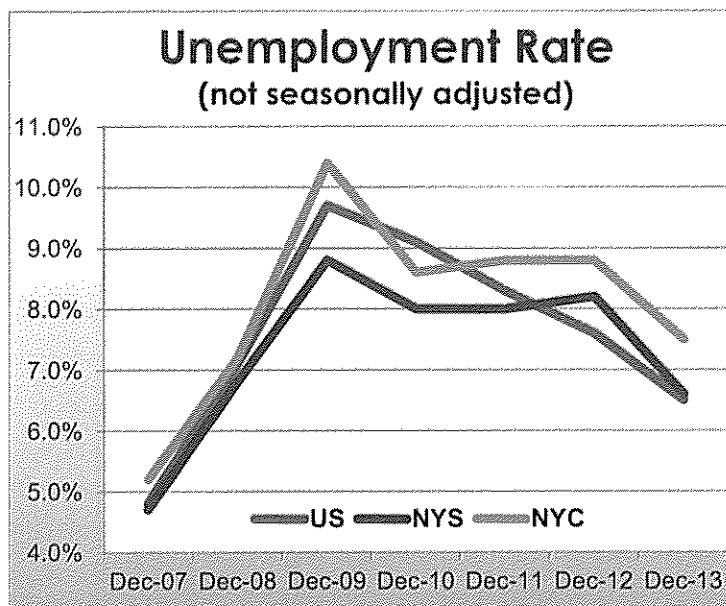
Starting in December 2007, the Great Recession upended our nation's economy. Unemployment soared and the number of people experiencing poverty began to rise. It should come as little surprise that households experiencing food insecurity also increased during that time.

By economists' definitions, the Great Recession ended in June 2009. However, the years since have shown that many recession trends have shown a disturbing tenacity. The result: many New Yorkers have yet to recover.

As the graph on the next page shows, New York City's unemployment rate has exceeded that of the nation and the state for much of the recession and recovery. While the unemployment rate has been in decline since 2009, there are still 121,000 more New York City residents who were unemployed last December than in the month the recession started.<sup>1</sup> Not included in these official unemployment numbers are the underemployed and the long-term unemployed who are discouraged and no longer job-seeking.

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<sup>1</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis of New York State Department of Labor data, December 2007-December 2013.



Unemployment numbers also say nothing about changes in the composition of the employment market. Many of the higher paying jobs that were lost in the recession have not been replaced; instead, the greatest job gains have occurred in sectors that employ people at the lowest end of the pay scale.<sup>2</sup> Given this trend, it should come as little surprise that, adjusted for inflation, median family incomes in New York City in 2012 were 6.5 percent below the level in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

Loss of jobs, long-term unemployment and reductions in wages and salaries have taken a serious toll on many New Yorkers. Nearly a quarter of a million New

Yorkers (235,000) have fallen into poverty since the start of the recession, with *most* of this increase (62 percent) occurring during the economic recovery.<sup>4</sup>

## IN THE FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED NEED, HOLES IN THE SAFETY NET HAVE GROWN

As need has increased, so, too has reliance on the programs that offer a safety net against hunger. Unfortunately, current resources and policy have kept this safety net too small and the holes in it too big to meet the need adequately and effectively.

**SNAP enrollment has plateaued despite substantial numbers of eligible but unenrolled New Yorkers.** A federal entitlement program, SNAP now provides food assistance to 46.6 million, or one in seven, Americans.<sup>5</sup> Available to any household that meets the eligibility criteria (the most important of which are income and immigration status), SNAP is *countercyclical*, meaning when the economy shrinks, it can grow to meet rising need. As the graph on the next page illustrates, SNAP enrollment in New York City first exceeded 1.8 million residents – approximately one in five – in December 2010 and has not dropped below that threshold since, evidence of the elevated need the recession has left in its wake.<sup>6</sup>

Participation, however, has fluctuated little since then; as of this January, it was only 0.6 percent higher than in December 2010,<sup>7</sup> despite the fact that HRA's own estimates have found that

<sup>2</sup> Fiscal Policy Institute. *The State of Working New York 2013: Workers Are Paying a High Price for Persistent Unemployment*. August 2013.

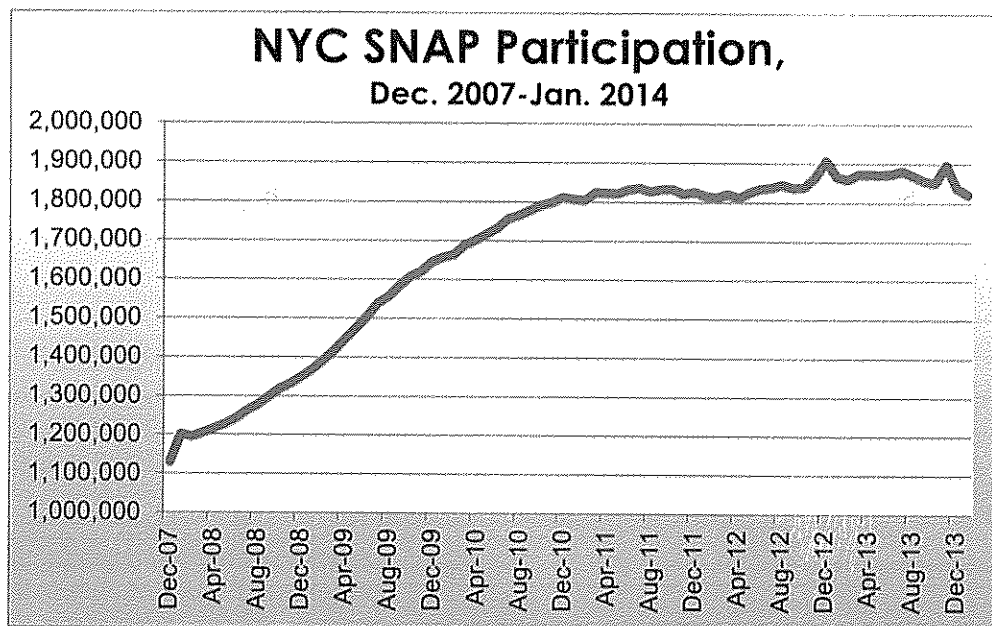
<sup>3</sup> Fiscal Policy Institute. "While Some Improvement Crept in during 2012, NYC's Family Incomes and Poverty Status Are Still Much Worse than before the Recession." September 30, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey data, 2007-2012.

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). March 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis of SNAP enrollment as reported by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) through January 2014.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



approximately 500,000 New York City residents are eligible for SNAP but not enrolled.<sup>8</sup> Clearly more and better outreach is needed to reach and enroll New Yorkers who could and should be receiving needed food supports.

Despite SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs (like school meals, and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC) nearly one in three New York City residents struggles to afford food, and approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on emergency food – evidence that a meal gap remains.

Analysis by Feeding America finds an annual meal gap in New York City of 235 million meals.<sup>9</sup> This is the number of meals that the resources of food-insecure New Yorkers fall short of providing on an annual basis. While emergency food providers make heroic efforts to keep from having to turn away anyone in need, the food provided at food pantries and soup kitchens over the course of the year falls short of closing the gap by approximately 100 million meals.

**SNAP cuts have taken away 76 million meals from low-income New Yorkers.** Since Feeding America's research was conducted, a sweeping, across-the-board cut to SNAP benefits took effect, meaning New York City's meal gap is likely to be higher. The graph on the next page illustrates New York City's meal gap prior to November 2013, and the number of additional meals lost after the SNAP cut.

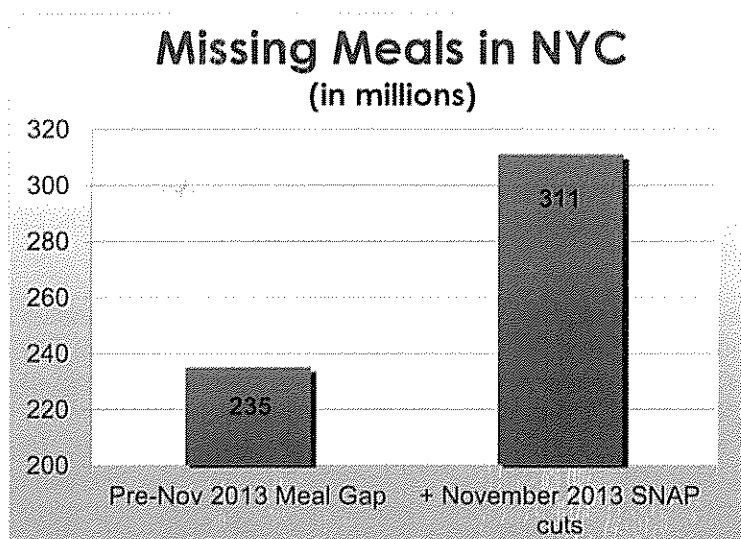
#### What is the meal gap?

The meal gap translates the *dollars* food-insecure families need for an adequate, nutritious diet *into* a number of *meals*.

In short, it is the number of meals by which food-insecure households fall short every year.

<sup>8</sup> HRA. "New York City Estimated Food Stamp Participation Rates: 2006-2010." This metric has not been updated since 2010. By a different estimation methodology used by the United States Department of Agriculture and known as the Program Access Index, New York City's SNAP enrollment in 2011 was approximately 85 percent of eligible residents – meaning approximately 320,000 New Yorkers are eligible but unenrolled.

<sup>9</sup> Feeding America. *Map the Meals Gap*. (2012).



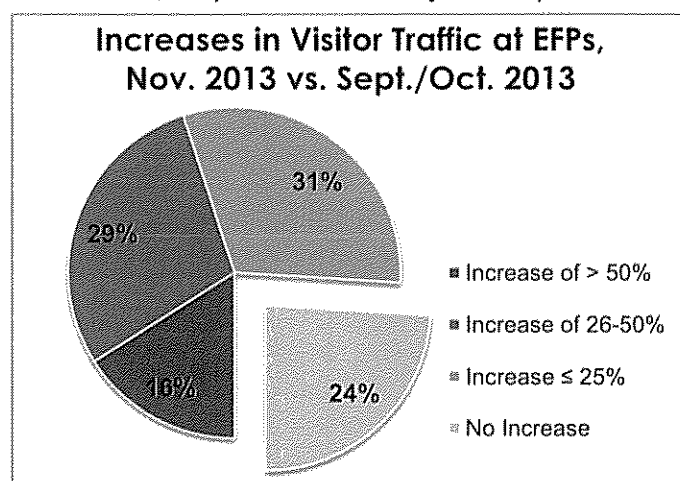
The November cuts have affected every SNAP recipient, reducing average household benefit amounts in New York City from approximately \$281 to \$262 per month. In the aggregate, this average monthly household reduction of \$19 sums up to an annual loss of approximately \$230 million for New York City.<sup>10</sup>

These cuts are the result of a deal struck in December 2010 in order to pay for a \$0.06 per meal increase in federal school lunch reimbursements as part of the "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act."<sup>11</sup>

While the White House promised to work with Congress to restore the funds before the cuts could take effect, the promise was never fulfilled.

**The November 2013 SNAP cuts had an immediate and widespread effect on need for emergency food.** Emergency food is our last line of defense against hunger. When cash, benefits and the generosity of family and friends have been exhausted, the emergency food network of food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters is the resource of last resort for those struggling to put food on the table. Approximately 37 million Americans rely on emergency food at some point over the course of the year.<sup>12</sup>

In New York City, approximately 1.4 million residents rely on a network of approximately 850 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters across the five boroughs. As the graph below indicates, in the month that the SNAP cut took effect, 76 percent of our city's food pantries and soup kitchens reported an increase in visitors relative to the immediately preceding months. Even more – 85 percent – reported an increase when compared to November of the previous year, days after Super Storm Sandy devastated coastal communities and left all of Manhattan below 40<sup>th</sup> Street without power for more than a week.<sup>13</sup> Almost one-half (48 percent) of food pantries and soup kitchens reported running out of food last November; many were forced to ration food or to turn people away.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis of SNAP enrollment and benefit data as reported by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

<sup>11</sup> Public Law 111-296.

<sup>12</sup> Feeding America.

<sup>13</sup> Food Bank For New York City. "Research Brief: Visitor Traffic Increases at Emergency Food Providers Post-SNAP Cuts." January 2014.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

New York City's emergency food network was already struggling to meet the escalating levels of need driven up by long-term effects of the Great Recession, a struggle compounded by the concomitant drain of resources from smaller, local charities, particularly those based in low-income communities. Between 2007 and 2012, 250 food pantries and soup kitchens across the five boroughs – approximately 25 percent of the citywide network – closed their doors, leaving those remaining to confront elevated need as best they could.<sup>15</sup> In 2012, nearly two thirds of emergency food providers reported running short of food.<sup>16</sup>

Even before a single benefit dollar was cut, more than 40 percent of New Yorkers who receive SNAP were already turning to emergency food to keep food on the table through the month.<sup>17</sup> In a city where food costs are considerably higher than average – and where competing costs of living, like rent and utilities, are higher than average as well – monthly SNAP benefits often fall short. Indeed, among participants at food pantries and soup kitchens who receive SNAP, 76 percent report their benefits do not last past the third week of the month.<sup>18</sup> As we saw this past November, when SNAP benefits are reduced, it drives higher need at food pantries and soup kitchens – both among those already turning to emergency food for help, and for those who may find themselves newly in need of emergency food as a result of their reduced allotment.

## **BUDGET PRIORITIES TO ENSURE NO NEW YORKER GOES HUNGRY**

No New Yorker should go hungry: access to adequate, nutritious food is a fundamental human right. If our City is serious about lifting the floor for all New Yorkers, let us at least set the threshold there. Thankfully, the policies and programs to realize this core principle are already in existence, and with the collective commitment of leaders across sectors, we can make this happen. While the decision to cut SNAP has intensified the challenge, policy and budget options well within the authority and discretion of City government can considerably improve the lives of New Yorkers who struggle to afford food.

New York City's anti-hunger resources – primarily those that bolster SNAP enrollment and fortify our emergency food system – are more vital than ever. Food Bank For New York City offers these recommendations on behalf of the emergency food network in a spirit of partnership. It is our hope this spirit will be met by constructive engagement by the City Council and the Administration. We are strongest and most effective when we take on hunger together.

### **Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP**

Despite the already enacted reduction in benefit amounts, SNAP remains the first line of defense against hunger, and provides New York City residents with approximately \$3.2 billion annually for food purchases. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of eligible city residents still do not access the program. Food Bank is grateful for the fact that the SNAP outreach work funded annually by the City Council was added to the baseline budget,<sup>19</sup> and recommends that the strong public-private efforts to connect eligible New Yorkers to SNAP's sustainable

<sup>15</sup> Food Bank For New York City. *Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens Today*. 2012.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Food Bank For New York City. *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. 2013.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> The City Council annually funded \$200,000 for SNAP outreach at food pantries and soup kitchens; the funding has been split equally between Food Bank For New York City and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger.



nutritional support be further bolstered. With a goal to increase SNAP participation to 90 percent of eligible New Yorkers over the next four years, the Administration and the City Council should ensure funding is available to:

- Strengthen and coordinate public and private SNAP outreach efforts throughout the city:
  - Draw down available federal matching money for the newly baselined \$200,000 in SNAP outreach funding.
  - Take common-sense measures to reach eligible New Yorkers, including but not limited to: an expansion of SNAP outreach services to every neighborhood; the development and expansion of targeted outreach to increase the participation of older New Yorkers, children, working families and immigrants; and the incorporation of SNAP outreach into Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), WIC and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) outreach.
  - Expand the distribution of SNAP outreach materials at hospitals, government offices, community food programs (senior centers, daycare centers, kids cafes, rehabilitation centers, shelters, etc.) and other services and providers that reach low-income populations.
- Simplify application and recertification processes.
  - Create simple systems through which working families and other groups facing hardships can apply for SNAP in ways that do not conflict with jobs, training programs, or job search activities, and that generally minimize potential scheduling conflicts, by: offering late evening and weekend hours at more offices; opening satellite offices for SNAP interviews; and establishing drop boxes for after-hours access.
  - Accelerate and expand efforts to enable true online application and recertification for SNAP.
  - Coordinate among multiple benefits so that clients can apply for several programs and services simultaneously, such as public health insurance, taxes, childcare subsidies and nutrition programs.
  - Increase available funds for Paperless Office System (POS) sites for expansion to more community-based sites, and authorize more POS sites supported by private funding.
- Maximize all federal waivers that expand program access and benefits, including:
  - the Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver, which extends issuance of SNAP benefits for unemployed childless adults beyond three months during times of high unemployment;
  - simplified applications for seniors;
  - elimination of mandatory verification of childcare expenses, which leads to under-utilization of allowable childcare deductions (especially for low-income households who rely on home-based childcare), in favor of verification only when questionable;
  - extension of recertification periods whenever possible, and waiver of recertification interviews for households in which all members are elderly and/or disabled and have no earned income;
  - adoption of a standard medical deduction for seniors whose medical expenses exceed \$35 per month; and
  - inclusion of pregnant women living alone under broad-based categorical eligibility, to raise the gross income limit on applications to 200% of the poverty level and better

align SNAP eligibility with WIC.

- Improve SNAP administration.
  - Enact comprehensive changes to the customer service experience in order to promote dignity among applicants and participants.
  - Provide annual incentive awards to local social service offices that achieve the largest increases in SNAP participation.
  - Increase funds for SNAP administration, which is essential to fund technology improvements and adequate staffing.
  - Ensure adequate staffing at government offices and application centers.
  - Improve city hotlines that serve both SNAP applicants and recipients trying to access their benefits, particularly by providing services in multiple languages.
- Draft SNAP notices using clear language, avoiding messages that discourage participation or cause confusion.
- Work with community-based organizations to set roles and expectations (for training, outreach, etc.) in Disaster SNAP scenarios.

### **Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System**

Reaching 1.4 million New York City residents, the emergency food system is not only the last line of defense against hunger, it is an opportunity to connect those with immediate food needs to other vital programs and services. Successful SNAP outreach in the emergency food network, thanks in part to the City Council's strategic investment in this work, has contributed to a near-doubling of participation among emergency food participants since 2004.<sup>20</sup> This model can and should be applied to other programs for which underparticipation may be a concern, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

The City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), administered by HRA, provides a year-round supply of shelf-stable food for almost 500 food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the five boroughs<sup>21</sup>; a City Council initiative, now baselined, supplements EFAP with \$1.3 million for additional shelf-stable food as well as frozen food. The FY 2014 Modified Budget for EFAP is \$11.7 million, \$9.5 million of which funds food purchases.<sup>22</sup>

While we are grateful for the baselining of the City Council initiative, EFAP effectively remains flat-funded in the FY 2015 Preliminary Budget. In the face of food inflation, this flat-funding has resulted in a real loss of purchasing power. As the graph on the next page shows, EFAP funding has not kept pace with changes in food costs.

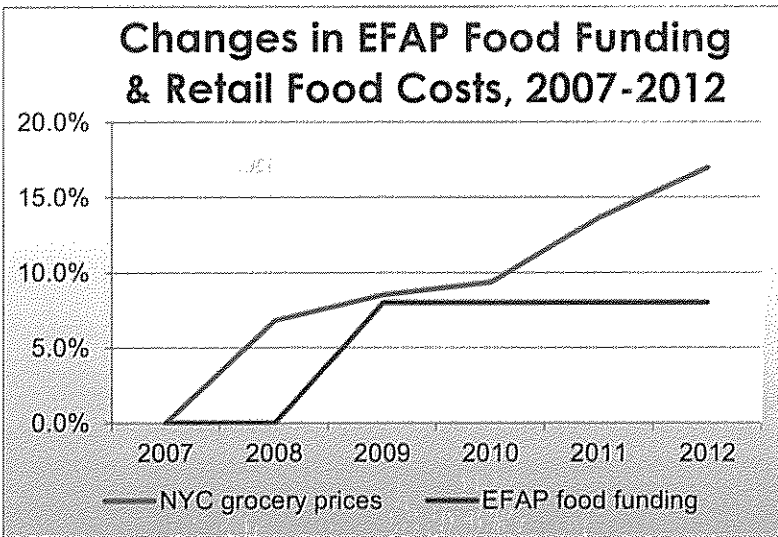
With the twin goals of leveraging the reach of the emergency food network to connect participants to more sustainable income supports and of shoring up the supply of emergency food to ensure no New Yorker goes hungry, the Administration and the Council should secure resources to:

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<sup>20</sup> Food Bank For New York City. *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. 2013.

<sup>21</sup> HRA. "New York City Human Resources Administration And Cornell University Cooperative Extension Encourage Brooklyn Families To 'Cut The Junk' Through Hands-On Education And A Healthy Eating Guide At Fort Greene Food Stamp Center" (press release). September 2012.

<sup>22</sup> New York City Office of Management and Budget. Preliminary FY 2015 Budget, Departmental Estimates. 2014. This reflects Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) expenses only.



- Increase EFAP OTPS funding to a FY 2015 funding level of \$19.8 million to reflect food inflation and the increase in New York City poverty levels since the start of the Great Recession, as well as the chronic inadequacy of the existing food supply to meet need.

- Create an advisory council consisting of representatives of emergency food providers from all five boroughs, including nutritionists that will meet with HRA on a quarterly basis so

as to advise HRA on all EFAP food purchases.

- Continue improvements to food quality by offering more minimally processed and fresh food, and by giving programs choice over food selection.
- Enact a policy of cost-neutral preferencing of kosher and halal products.
- Ensure that EFAP distributed during disaster response is incorporated into New York City's request for federal reimbursement of disaster-related expenditures.

### Other Measures Necessary to End Hunger in New York City

Outside the purview of HRA and this Committee, a number of important measures are also needed to end hunger in our City. Maximizing participation in school meals, through adoption of **Universal School Meals** and expansion of **Breakfast after the Bell**, will not only provide hundreds of thousands of New York City children with access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch, it will also help close New York City's meal gap.

Supporting financial policies that benefit low-income New Yorkers, such as an enhanced Earned Income Tax Credit for low-wage workers without dependents, and expanding programs and services that **increase financial empowerment** – such as free tax assistance, matched savings programs and financial counseling – are also vital. Food Bank is grateful for the City Council's support of our free tax preparation program, which last year put more than \$80 million in refunds and credits directly into the pockets of low-income New Yorkers.

To address hunger at its root, an array of anti-poverty measures – chief among them a living wage with benefits – must also be advanced.

### SUMMARY

In the wake of the worst economic downturn in generations and an unprecedented cut to our country's deepest investment in preventing hunger, local leadership has never been more important. This is our City's moment to show its commitment to the principle that no New Yorker should lack access to an affordable, nutritious diet. Let us set a goal of closing New York City's

widening meal gap and becoming the first city in the country to end food poverty. Food Bank looks forward to working with our City's new leaders to develop the plan and marshal the necessary resources. While the problem may seem massive in its scope, we know hunger is a problem that can be solved. The tools are there, and within our grasp. Together we can do this.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today and look forward to your questions.

## RAPP against abuse

Posted on Wednesday, May 29, 2013



"The program helped me overcome my fears," said Sheila Munim, with her counselor, Archana Arora.

*Story and photos by Robin Elisabeth Kilmer*

For the past three years, the teenagers in the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) have had to fight proposed budget cuts.

This year, they are taking up arms yet again to restore \$3 million in funding that is slated to be eliminated in Mayor Bloomberg's 2014 Executive Budget.

Dozens of teenagers decked in RAPP t-shirts and bearing signs of support gathered on the steps of City Hall this past Wed., May 22nd. Joining them were representatives from RAPP's three non-profit providers, CAMBA, The Center Against Domestic Violence (CADV) and STEPS To End Family Violence (STEPS).

Chants of "Hey, hey, ho, ho, dating violence has got to go," echoed throughout the plaza.

Lucia Riviuccio, Director of the RAPP/STEPS to End Family Violence, led the students in a call-and-response sequence.

"What do we want?" she yelled.

"RAPP!" shouted the students.

"When do we what it?"

"Now!"

Also pledging their support were several Councilmembers, including Ydanis Rodríguez, Annabel Palma, and Andy King.

"Teen RAPP has proven to be a successful and cost-effective violence program. Despite the challenging fiscal climate in which the City finds itself, reducing funding for the prevention of dating violence and school bullying is the wrong choice," said Councilmember Palma.



"We see the education around ending violence," said Lucia Rivieccio, Director, RAPP/STEPS to End Family Violence.

Councilmember King encouraged the students, reminding them that in the civil rights movement, the work of young people figured largely.

"It's your turn to be the next generation of leaders," he told them.

These student leaders seemed to take their responsibilities seriously.

Several, including Sheila Munim, a student at IS 52, openly discussed their experiences.

"I've been through a lot, and that's why RAPP means so much to me," she said. Munim, who is South Asian, said she has been bullied at her school because of her ethnicity.

Munim's RAPP counselor, Archana Arora, accompanied her to the rally.

"I realized that not only was she being teased and bullied, but she internalized that she's different. Not only was she feeling isolated and lonely, it affected her emotional health," she explained.

"I was blaming myself for what I was going through," added Munim. "The program helped me overcome my fears, and know myself better. I try to keep positive thoughts."

Munim also shared a few thoughts about Arora: "She's a great counselor to me."

Bronx students (from left to right) Nyree Saomon, Liliana Michaca, and Shamarra Samuel benefitted from RAPP; "It makes me feel better about myself," said Saoman.

RAPP currently serves 45,000 students in 65 middle and high schools throughout New York City; the organization estimates that its annual cost per student is \$66.

Its advocates argue that it is one of the nation's most successful violence-prevention programs, and that it is critical in helping young adolescents how to have healthy relationships, recognize bullying and abuse and help themselves and others handle dangerous relationships.

As highlighted by Munim, the program does not limit its services to those who are in abusive relationships.

Many on the steps of City Hall that day came to discuss their experience with RAPP as it helped them deal with a different kind of abuse: bullying.

The statistics for both phenomena are alarming.

While the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault reports that 40 percent of male and female high school students said they had been victims of dating violence at least once, about 30 percent of teenagers in the U.S. have been involved in bullying, either as a bully or as a victim of teenage bullying, according to the American Medical Association.

"We see the education around ending violence—all kinds of violence – and bullying fits right in. We don't see them as separate things," said director Riveccio.

Nyree Saomon, Shamarra Samuel and Liliana Michaca, all students from the Bronx, found solace in from RAPP after being bullied in school.

"I joined so I could talk about my problems with someone," said Saomon. "It makes me feel better about myself."

The girls spoke about the different ways they have been bullied.

"People talk about the way you look," said Michaca.

Councilmember Ydanis Rodríguez lent his support.

"Like you're not good enough. People call me fat and make fun of my size," added Samuel.

Michaca said others make fun of her ethnicity; she is of Mexican descent.

The girls said they benefit from group discussions, and learn about other people's problems too.

RAPP counselors teach teens about healthy relationships, and how to deal with bad ones.

"One thing we do is help students get out of abusive relationships, and we do safety planning to help them safely get out of abusive relationships," explained Connie Márquez, RAPP's acting program director.

For more information on RAPP, visit [www.saveteenrapp.org](http://www.saveteenrapp.org); for help, call 800.621.HOPE.

## **TEEN RELATIONSHIP ABUSE**

Statistics provided by Teen RAPP

1 in 7 NYC high school students is physically or sexually assaulted by a dating partner.

1 in 10 teenagers in New York City schools reports experiencing physical or sexual violence in a dating relationship within the past year.

1 in 3 teens report experiencing some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse.

The New York City Domestic Violence Hotline receives an average of 1,400 calls from teenagers every month.

67% of teens in abusive relationships never tell anyone about the abuse.

Nearly 80% of NYC teen girls who experience relationship abuse continue dating their abuser.

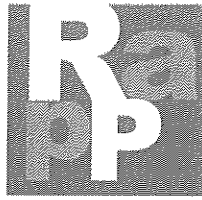
2 out of 3 teens are bullied.

Teen relationship abuse victims are more likely to struggle with depression, anorexia and bulimia, drug and alcohol abuse, gun violence, coerced unprotected sex and teen pregnancies.

Victims of abuse are less likely to complete high school or graduate high school in four years.

FOR HELP, CALL 800.621.HOPE.





## Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

[SaveTeenRAPP.org](http://SaveTeenRAPP.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PHOTOS: Students, City Council Members Rally to Save Critical School-Based Anti-Violence and Bullying Program Serving 45,000 Public School Teens**

*Teen RAPP—slated for elimination in Mayor's Budget—to be voted on in June*

New York City, Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 — On Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Council Member Annabel Palma, Chair of the NYC City Council's General Welfare Committee, joined by colleagues Julissa Ferreras, Robert Jackson, Ydanis Rodriguez, Gale Brewer, Margaret Chin, Brad Lander, Letitia James, Steve Levin, Diana Reyna, Sara Gonzalez, Leroy Comrie, James Gennaro, Jimmy Van Bramer, Daniel Dromm, Karen Koslowitz and Deborah Rose, gathered with scores of NYC public school students on the steps of City Hall to urge restoration of funding for the Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP) in the City's FY2014 budget.

Teen RAPP—one of the nation's most successful violence-prevention programs—serves over 45,000 students in 65 public schools across the five boroughs. At \$66 per student annually, Teen RAPP is the city's most cost-efficient social intervention program.

**Photos from Wednesday's rally appear below:**



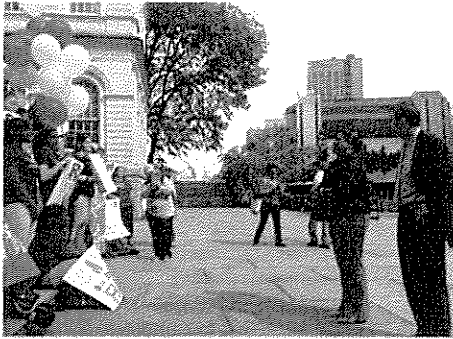
**NYC Council Member Andy King (D-Bronx) addresses Teen RAPP students on the steps of City Hall, urging them to continue fighting for the program's funding**

[Right-click to download high-res image](#)



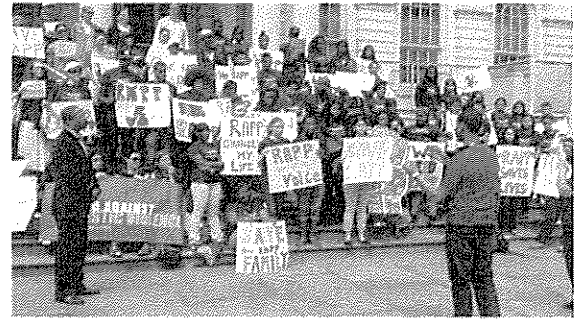
**Robert James, RAPP Peer Leader at Washington Irving High School in Manhattan, talks about why the Teen RAPP program is so important to him**

[Right-click to download high-res image](#)



**Councilmembers Annabel Palma (D-Bronx) and Brad Lander (D-Brooklyn) express their strong support for Teen RAPP to dozens of students rallying on the City Hall steps.**

[Right-click to download high-res image](#)

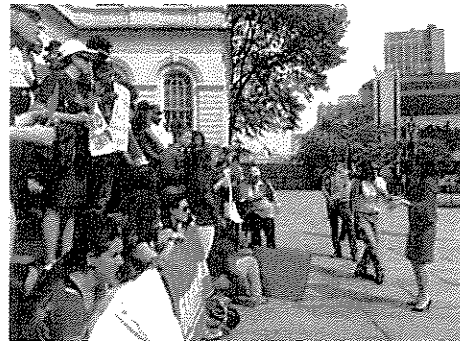


**2012 "Rap 4 RAPP" contest winner Tyriek Overton performs his award-winning rap about healthy relationships for the crowd of Teen RAPP supporters**

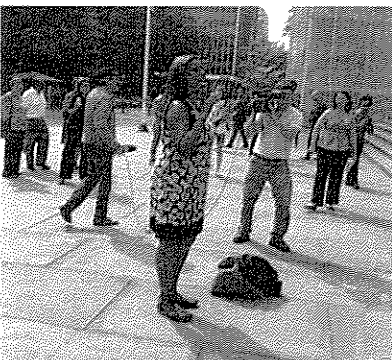
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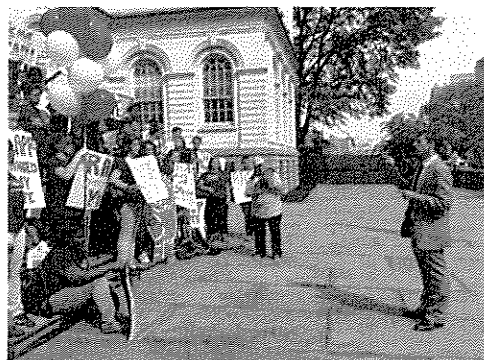
**Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez (D-Manhattan) tells Teen RAPP supporters, "The New York City Council is with you! Keep fighting!"**



**Councilmember Liz Crowley (D-Queens) tells dozens of Teen RAPP supporters, "Ultimately, Teen RAPP saves lives."**



**Councilmember Letitia James (D-Brooklyn) tells the crowd of Teen RAPP supporters, "Nothing happens in this world without young people. Recognize the importance of politics and civic engagement."**



**Councilmember Steve Levin (D-Brooklyn) urges Teen RAPP supporters to contact their elected officials and urge that the RAPP program be restored in the city budget.**

**All who support Teen RAPP are urged to visit the Save Teen RAPP website and send a message to the City Council urging continuation of this vital program. For more information, please visit [SaveTeenRAPP.org](http://SaveTeenRAPP.org).**



## City budget cuts threaten Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

Posted: Thursday, May 30, 2013 1:23 pm | Updated: 11:24 am, Fri May 31, 2013.

*By Cyril Josh Barker Amsterdam News Staff*

Public school students, parents and elected officials are fighting to save funding for a crucial program in schools aimed to reduce bullying and violence. Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP) in the city's FY2014 budget is under the knife.

Teen RAPP is one of the nation's most successful violence-prevention programs, serving over 45,000 students in 65 public schools across the five boroughs. At \$66 per student annually, Teen RAPP is the city's most cost-efficient social intervention program.

For 14 years, Teen RAPP has provided vital services to the city's middle and high school students, teaching kids how to have healthy relationships, recognize bullying and abuse and help themselves and others handle dangerous relationships. At a rally held last week, Teen RAPP students demonstrated the effectiveness and necessity of the program.

"Teen RAPP has enabled me to have a positive impact on my peers," said Danisha Eaddy, a Teen RAPP alumna and college student. "As one of them recently said to me, 'You are my role model, and I admire all the time and effort you have put into the program.' Teen RAPP is the reason why I am where I am today, and the reason that I will continue to work to help end teen violence in New York City."

Council Member Annabel Palma, chair of the New York City Council's General Welfare Committee, said the program has proven to be a successful and cost-effective violence prevention program.

"Despite the challenging fiscal climate in which the city finds itself, reducing funding for the prevention of dating violence and school bullying is the wrong choice," she said. "I intend to work with my colleagues to restore its funding."

According to Judith Kahan, CEO of the Center Against Domestic Violence, one in seven high school students in the city are physically or sexually assaulted by someone they are dating.

She said, "Violence has lifelong negative impacts on our students," said Kahan. "Kids depend on access to Teen RAPP's in-school services to keep them safe and help them realize their goals."

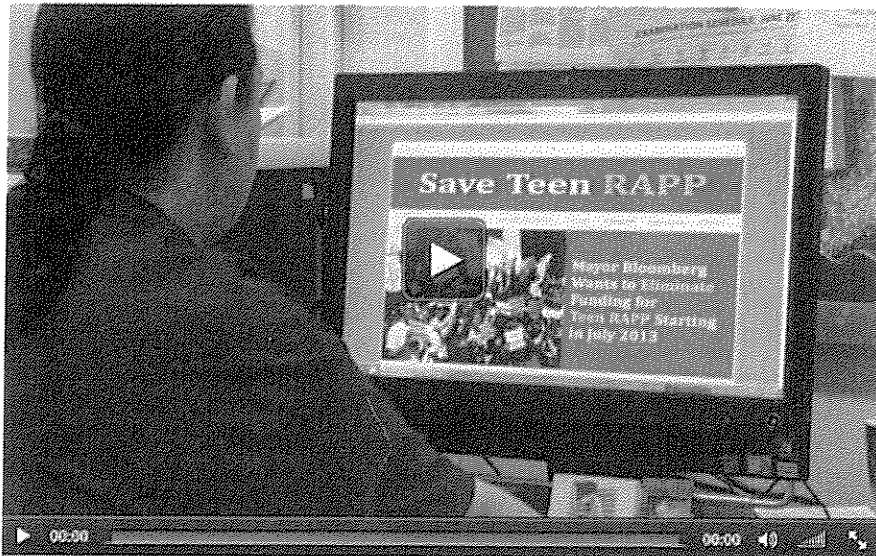
In an effort to save the program, a contest was held last month called "Rap 4 RAPP." In the contest, aspiring student MCs were encouraged to submit a 45-second rap that educated key decision-makers about Teen RAPP's benefits. The contest invited students from all five boroughs to write and record raps sharing their perspectives on relationships, what can go wrong and strategies for making things better.

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## Truman High School students fight to save Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)

Published: May 29, 2013 2:02 PM



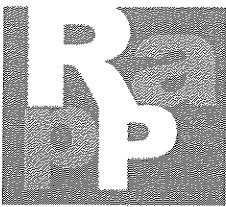
The program teaches students about how to recognize the signs of abusive relationships. (May 29, 2013)

THE BRONX - Some Bronx high schoolers are putting up a fight to save a program aimed at preventing abuse.

Truman High School students say they credit the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) for teaching them about how to have healthy relationships, and they want to make sure it doesn't get cut off from city funding.

RAPP pairs students with peer educators and trained counselors who help them recognize the signs of verbal, emotional and physical abuse.

The program costs the city \$3 million every year, and has been saved from the chopping block for the past three years. Students say they want Mayor Michael Bloomberg to know it's worth every penny to save it again.



# Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

## Teen Relationship Abuse – Prevalence and Consequences

- One in seven NYC high school students is physically or sexually assaulted by a dating partner.
- Shockingly, 67% of teens in abusive relationships never tell anyone about the abuse.
- Nearly 80% of NYC teen girls who experience relationship abuse continue dating their abuser.
- Two out of three teens are bullied.
- Teen relationship abuse victims are more likely to struggle with depression, anorexia and bulimia, drug and alcohol abuse, gun violence, coerced unprotected sex and teen pregnancies.
- Victims of abuse are less likely to complete high school or graduate high school in four years.

## Teen RAPP – A Solution

- Teen RAPP is a school-based domestic violence prevention and anti-bullying program administered by the Human Resources Administration (HRA) that reaches over 47,000 ethnically and culturally diverse students in 58 NYC middle and high schools.
- Teen RAPP's successful program is highly recognized for bringing the prevention of domestic violence to high school students. Since 1999, Teen RAPP has taught New York public school students how to have healthy relationships, recognize bullying and abuse, and help themselves, family and peers handle dangerous relationships.
- Each RAPP school has a dedicated, full-time Social Worker who provides educational and counseling services through: classroom workshops; daily school-based individual, group and crisis counseling; continuous training for school staff, parents and community members; and intensive summer Peer Leadership training program.

## Teen RAPP Needs Your Support

- Teen RAPP serves 47,000 students citywide and is the City's most cost-efficient social intervention program.
- Teen RAPP saves New York City millions in potential costs related to medical treatment, hospitalization, juvenile detention, teen pregnancy, shelter placement, and other social services.
- Teen RAPP has enjoyed outstanding support from the NYC Council, resulting in the program being saved for the past four years. This year, Mayor de Blasio and HRA have baselined Teen RAPP in the FY2015 Executive Budget.
- We look forward to working with the City Council to expand Teen RAPP so that the program can serve thousands more students in additional middle and high schools throughout the city.

*RAPP is administered by these non-profit, community-based organizations:  
CAMBA, Center Against Domestic Violence and STEPS to End Family Violence*

## The RAPP Coalition



### Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

#### **CAMBA**

CAMBA is a non-profit agency that provides services that connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life. CAMBA offers integrated services and programs in the following core areas: Economic Development, Education & Youth Development, Family Support Services, HIV/AIDS Services, Housing Services & Development and Legal Services. CAMBA serves more than 35,000 individuals and families, including 8,000 youth, each year. Specifically, CAMBA helps people of low-income; those moving from welfare to work; people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or transitioning out of homelessness; individuals living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS; immigrants and refugees; children and young adults; entrepreneurs and other groups working to become self-sufficient. Learn more at [www.camba.org](http://www.camba.org).

#### **The Center Against Domestic Violence (CADV)**

Founded in 1977, The Center Against Domestic Violence (CADV) opened the first publicly-funded domestic violence shelter in New York State. Since then, CADV's outreach has expanded to include three full-service shelters for victims and their children, innovative education programs that reach more than 30,000 students each year, and programs that support victims and raise awareness throughout the community. Learn more about the not-for-profit CADV at [www.cadvny.org](http://www.cadvny.org).

#### **STEPS To End Family Violence (STEPS)**

STEPS To End Family Violence (STEPS) is an East Harlem-based non-profit preventing intergenerational abuse; providing trauma-informed strategies to promote healing; and advancing policy initiatives to support the needs of those affected by interpersonal violence. STEPS' services have evolved over the past 25 years to include advocacy and counseling for adults, children, teens; educational and therapeutic groups; training and consultation to social service and education professionals; as well as the first Teen Accountability Program in NYC for young men. STEPS' *Alternative to Incarceration* program remains the only program in New York dedicated to battered women defendants. In 1992 STEPS developed the first programs in NYC for teens and has been a RAPP provider since the inception of the program in 1999. STEPS is a program of Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families, a multi-faceted agency providing foster care and preventive services to children in all five boroughs and residential care for adults with developmental disabilities. Learn more at [www.egscf.org/services/steps](http://www.egscf.org/services/steps).

# Teen RAPP School List 12-11-13

R P	NYC RAPP CAMPUS	NYC RAPP SCHOOLS	CITY COUNCIL REP	COUNCIL DISTRICT	AGENCY	STUDENT POPULATION
	TOTAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SERVED BY TEEN RAPP					47,874
1	Marta Valle High School 145 Stanton Street New York, NY 10002	Marta Valle HS	Margaret Chin	1	STEPS	367
2	Lower East Side Preparatory High School 145 Stanton Street New York, NY 10002	Lower East Side Preparatory HS	Margaret Chin	1	STEPS	513
3	High School of Fashion Industries 225 West 24th Street New York, NY 10011	High School of Fashion Industries	Corey Johnson	3	STEPS	1669
4	Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Campus 122 Amsterdam Avenue New York, NY 10023	Manhattan Theatre Lab HS	Helen Rosenthal	6	CADV	2650
5	Park West High School 525 West 50th Street New York, NY 10019	Park West HS	Helen Rosenthal	6	CADV	2685
6	M.S. 256 154 West 93rd Street New York, NY 10025	Academic and Athletic Excellence	Helen Rosenthal	6	CADV	168
7	High School for Environmental Studies 448 West 56th Street New York, NY 10019	High School for Environmental Studies	Helen Rosenthal	6	CAMBA	1299
8	Brandeis Campus 145 West 84 <sup>th</sup> Street New York, NY 10024	The Urban Assembly School for Green Careers	Helen Rosenthal	6	STEPS	390
9	Brandeis Campus 145 West 84 <sup>th</sup> Street New York, NY 10024	The Global Learning Collaborative	Helen Rosenthal	6	STEPS	434
10	Brandeis Campus 145 West 84 <sup>th</sup> Street New York, NY 10024	Innovation Diploma Plus	Helen Rosenthal	6	STEPS	191
11	Brandeis Campus 145 West 84 <sup>th</sup> Street New York, NY 10024	Frank McCourt HS	Helen Rosenthal	6	STEPS	294
12	Manhattan Center for Science and Math 280 Pleasant Avenue New York, NY 10029	Manhattan Center for Science and Math	Melissa Mark-Viverito	8	STEPS	
13	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	John F. Kennedy HS	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
14	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	Bronx Theatre HS	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
15	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	Bronx Engineering and Technology Academy	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
16	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	Marble Hill Academy for International Studies HS	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
17	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	Bronx School of Law and Finance	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	

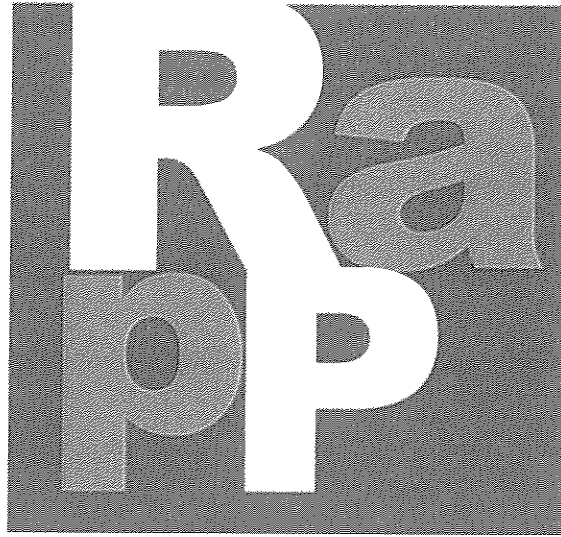


<b>R p</b>	<b>NYC RAPP CAMPUS</b>	<b>NYC RAPP SCHOOLS</b>	<b>CITY COUNCIL REP</b>	<b>COUNCIL DISTRICT</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>STUDENT POPULATION</b>
18	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	English Language Learners and International Support Preparatory Academy	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
19	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	New Visions Charter HS for Advanced Math and Science	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
20	John F Kennedy Campus 99 Terrace View Avenue Bronx, NY 10463	Humanity Charter School	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	CADV	
21	Inwood JHS 52 650 Academy Street New York, NY 10034	Inwood JHS 52	Ydanis Rodriguez	10	STEPS	
22	Truman HS 750 Baychester Ave Bronx, NY 10475	Bronx Health Sciences High School	Andy King	12	STEPS	
23	Truman HS 750 Baychester Ave Bronx, NY 10475	Harry S. Truman High School	Andy King	12	STEPS	

RP	NYC RAPP CAMPUS	NYC RAPP SCHOOLS	CITY COUNCIL REP	COUNCIL DISTRICT	AGENCY	STUDENT POPULATION
24	Angelo Patri MS 391 2225 Webster Avenue Room 405 Bronx, NY 10457	Angelo Patri MS 391	Ritchie Torres	15	CADV	
25	Health Opportunities High School 350 Gerard Avenue Bronx, NY 10451	Health Opportunities HS	Maria del Carmen Arroyo	17	CAMBA	
26	Health Opportunities High School 350 Gerard Avenue Bronx, NY 10451	Community School for Social Justice	María del Carmen Arroyo	17	CAMBA	
27	JHS IS 131/Albert Einstein 885 Bolton Avenue Bronx, NY 10473	JHS 131 Albert Einstein	Annabel Palma	18	STEPS	
28	I.S. 10 - The Horace Greely School 45-11 31st Avenue Queens, NY 11103	I.S. 10 -The Horace Greely School	Costa G. Constantinides	22	STEPS	
29	John Bowne High School 63-25 Main St. Flushing, NY 11367	John Bowne High School	Rory I. Lancman	24	CAMBA	
30	Frank Sinatra School of the Arts 35-12 35th Avenue Long Island City, NY 11106	Frank Sinatra School of the Arts	Jimmy Van Bramer	26	CADV	
31	August Martin High School 156-10 Baisely Blvd. Jamaica, NY 11434	August Martin High School	Ruben Wills	28	CAMBA	
32	Philip Livingston, P.S.261 314 Pacific St, Brooklyn, NY 11201	Philip Livingston, P.S.261	Stephen Levin	33	CADV	
33	The Williamsburg High School Academy MS 50 183 South 3rd Street Room 128 Brooklyn, NY 11211	Williamsburg HS	Antonio Reynoso	34	CADV	
34	Prospect Heights Educational Campus 883 Classon Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11225	High School for Global Citizenship	Laurie Cumbo	35	STEPS	
35	Prospect Heights Educational Campus 883 Classon Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11225	International HS	Laurie Cumbo	35	STEPS	
36	Prospect Heights Educational Campus 883 Classon Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11228	Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre	Laurie Cumbo	35	STEPS	
37	Prospect Heights Educational Campus 883 Classon Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11229	Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment	Laurie Cumbo	35	STEPS	
38	Franklin K. Lane HS Campus 999 Jamaica Ave Room 160 Brooklyn, NY 11208	Franklin K. Lane HS	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
39	Franklin K. Lane HS Campus 999 Jamaica Ave Brooklyn, NY 11208	Brooklyn Lab HS	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	

	NYC RAPP CAMPUS	NYC RAPP SCHOOLS	CITY COUNCIL REP	COUNCIL DISTRICT	AGENCY	STUDENT POPULATION
40	Franklin K. Lane HS Campus 999 Jamaica Ave Brooklyn, NY 11208	Cypress Hill Collegiate Prep	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
41	Franklin K. Lane HS Campus 999 Jamaica Ave Brooklyn, NY 11208	Academy of Innovative Technology HS	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
42	Franklin K. Lane HS Campus 999 Jamaica Ave Brooklyn, NY 11209	Multicultural HS	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
43	Bushwick Campus 400 Irving Ave Brooklyn, NY 11237	Academy for Environmental Leadership	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
44	Bushwick Campus 400 Irving Ave Brooklyn, NY 11238	Bushwick School For Social Justice	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
45	Bushwick Campus 400 Irving Ave Brooklyn, NY 11240	Academy of Urban Planning	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
46	Bushwick Campus 400 Irving Ave Brooklyn, NY 11240	Brooklyn School of Math and Research	Rafael Espinal	37	CADV	
47	School for Democracy and Leadership 600 Kingston Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11203	School for Democracy and Leadership	Matthieu Eugene	40	CAMBA	
48	Academy for Young Writers 1065 Elton Street, Rm 428A Brooklyn, NY 11239	Academy for Young Writers	Inez Barron	42	CADV	
49	South Shore Campus 6565 Flatlands Ave Brooklyn, NY 11236	Academy for Conservation and the Environment	Alan Maisel	46	CAMBA	
50	South Shore Campus 6565 Flatlands Ave Brooklyn, NY 11237	Brooklyn Theater Arts HS	Alan Maisel	46	CAMBA	
51	South Shore Campus 6565 Flatlands Ave Brooklyn, NY 11238	Brooklyn Generation School	Alan Maisel	46	CAMBA	
52	South Shore Campus 6565 Flatlands Ave Brooklyn, NY 11239	Victory Collegiate HS	Alan Maisel	46	CAMBA	
53	South Shore Campus 6565 Flatlands Ave Brooklyn, NY 11240	Brooklyn Bridge Academy	Alan Maisel	46	CAMBA	
54	David A. Boody I.S. 228 228 Avenue S Brooklyn, NY 11223	David A. Boody I.S. 228	Mark Treyger	47	CADV	
55	Abraham Lincoln High School 2800 Ocean Parkway Room 308 Brooklyn, NY 11235	Abraham Lincoln High School	Mark Treyger	47	CADV	
56	Sheepshead Bay HS 3000 Avenue X Brooklyn, NY 11235	Sheepshead Bay HS 3000 Avenue X Brooklyn NY 11236	Chaim Deutsch	48	CADV	
57	Edward R. Murrow HS 1600 Avenue L Room 124 Brooklyn, NY 11230	Edward R. Murrow HS	Chaim Deutsch	48	CADV	

R P	NYC RAPP CAMPUS	NYC RAPP SCHOOLS	CITY COUNCIL REP	COUNCIL DISTRICT	AGENCY	STUDENT POPULATION
58	Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical Education HS 290 St. Mark's Place Staten Island, NY 10301	Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical Education HS	Deborah Rose	49	CADV	
59	Tottenville HS 100 Luten Avenue Room A103J Staten Island, NY 10312	Tottenville HS	Vincent Ignizio	51	CADV	
TOTAL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SERVED BY TEEN RAPP						



# **How Teen RAPP Changed My Life:**

**Personal Stories from NYC Public  
School Students and Alumni of the  
Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention  
Program (Teen RAPP)**



## Personal Stories of Teen RAPP Students and Alumni

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**Jackie Muniz**

**[SCHOOL]**

*Testimony to Women's Issues Committee of the New York City Council  
New York City Council  
April 26, 2010*

I was sixteen years old when I first joined RAPP. I was introduced by a friend who had been in counseling for a long time with Gale our school RAPP social worker.

During that time, I had been involved in a very abusive relationship with my boyfriend. He was a gang member, and I was afraid of him. I was also VERY afraid to tell anyone what I was going through. My friend, somewhat aware of my situation would always mention RAPP and would talk to me about Gale and would constantly suggest that I see her. I was afraid to venture out, try new things, and to even ask for advice.

To the world I seemed like a happy, confident young girl, but I had become uncomfortable in my own skin. I didn't like who I had become. Most of my moves were controlled and monitored. When he couldn't watch me, he had his friends telling him every step I took. He decided which of my friends I was allowed to hang out with, which was basically no one. He bought me a cell phone, and then got mad if I called anyone but him. On a daily basis, he insulted me, made me feel like I was nothing, and then to make it all

worse, blamed it all on me. He had convinced me that everything he did to me was my fault.

When I would start to cry, he called me overly sensitive.

It got worse over time. The threats, insults and physical abuse kept me terrified to do anything or to leave. He constantly grabbed me, pushed me up against the wall, and slapped me in the face in front of his friends and his family. Things had been getting worse and worse.

Before meeting him, I had been a very good student, but my grades and attendance began to suffer. I remember feeling so helpless I didn't believe that things could get better.

When my friend finally convinced me to meet Gale, I was still scared and doubted I could be helped. I didn't think anyone would understand. But, from the moment I entered the RAPP office I felt so welcomed; I was very selective about whom I opened up to at the time but because of the comfort that I felt with her and the trust she inspired in me, I surprisingly did. I had originally anticipated the sessions to be about my relationship and never predicted that they would be more about *ME* than anything else; more about building my individuality and working on my self-esteem. She helped me to feel and try to be as safe as possible while I still chose to stay in the relationship, even when it got so bad that after he found out I was seeing her, he started sending her threatening emails.

I finally decided to leave him. I did so because I realized that I didn't deserve to be

treated the way I was being treated and that none of it was my fault. Leaving wasn't easy, but once I did I felt as though my life was beginning all over again. From then on, I never looked back. My attendance improved and finishing high school became my priority. I began to reconnect with friends whom I had lost contact with as result of my relationship having isolated me from them.

My involvement with RAPP during this turning point was essential. It helped to strengthen me even more as I began to make new friends and became involved in many different activities which served to awaken many interests and talents which I never knew I had. My intelligence and creativity was always sought out and I began to feel special again. This was especially true during the summer program when I had the opportunity to serve as a peer educator to other teens about relationship abuse and prevention.

RAPP became my second family, and I looked forward to being there every day. I met so many amazing kids of different backgrounds and with different stories, many of whom I continue to be close friends. Many of them were experiencing problems of their own. I was witness to many their frustrations, but also to their transformations. We held support groups where we had the opportunity to build close bonds of trust and reliance. It was definitely a haven and community of kids who genuinely just sought safety, guidance and trust.

For many of us, not just me, RAPP was a reason to look forward to going to school. We



had all finally found a place where we belonged and were excited to be together, and felt supported and cared about. We were always challenged and made to think about ourselves and others. We felt very proud to wear our RAPP shirts and definitely felt so lucky to have a home in school. It was a family to us, and for some people, the only family they had ever had.

Those of us who became Peer Leaders would go to different classes within our school as well as different community groups to teach others what we knew about teen relationship abuse and domestic violence. When I felt I was ready, I also began to speak out about my personal experience. I never imagined how many people could be inspired by my story and just how strong an impact this experience would have in my life. I never knew that what I had gone through would have been able to help others, but it did.

Being a part of RAPP molded me as an individual who has grown into a young woman who has become strong, independent, and happy. RAPP also created a career path for me that I had never before considered. I knew I wanted to be a Social Worker.

Upon graduation from high school, I was accepted into City College. Coming from a family of no college graduates, I had never envisioned myself entering college. When applying, I even doubted that I would be accepted especially because my grades suffered because of my relationship. However, now it's five years later and I will be the first person in my family to

have earned a college degree and plus with high honors! That makes me and my parents so proud. I have to thank my RAPP social worker for believing in me.

So now is probably the best ending (and new beginning) to my story. After a lengthy, rigorous, and quite scary application process, with the odds against me and waiting and worrying, I can share with you that I was accepted into my first choice Graduate program - Hunter College's School of Social Work.

And in case any of you were wondering did I STOP the cycle of abuse. I dated after that relationship, and have since found a very special someone whom I am glad to say is an amazing person who will be graduating with honors right beside me. He is respectful, loving, kind, and we are equals in a very happy and healthy relationship.

And that's how RAPP has changed my life. It's a clear answer- it has changed it in every way.

I come to you today to ask you to save RAPP as RAPP has saved me. I am becoming a social worker so that I can give back and work with kids like me - urging them to go to college and not drop out.

Thank you for your time.

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## Personal Stories of Teen RAPP Students and Alumni

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**Wilfree Vasquez**

**Martin Luther King Jr. High School**

*Testimony to the General Welfare Committee of the New York City Council*

*New York City Council*

*March 8, 2010*

My name is Wilfree Vasquez and I am a graduate of the Martin Luther King Jr. High School Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program.

RAPP changed my life. The program taught me to have healthy relationships and to teach other students. I thought abuse was only physical and sexual, but I learned how it can be financial, verbal, and emotional. Because of this program, I decided to pursue a career in social work. I want to be able to help teenagers become more aware of this epidemic of abuse that has been swept under the rug for years.

RAPP taught me to believe in myself. I have gained the confidence I need to make it in the world. RAPP taught me that I am the driver on my own path.

My freshman year at Martin Luther King Jr. High School was the worst. I was judged, pushed, shoved, ridiculed, and alienated. This school was not a welcoming home for gay students. I was an outcast until RAPP saved me from an environment filled with hatred and ignorance.

I was alone as I approached the RAPP room for the first time – a room that would eventually change my life. My empty world would to be filled with people who would accept me for who I am. Gale – the RAPP Coordinator - made it clear that this program was for everyone. She asked me about myself and told me that I was always welcome in the RAPP room. RAPP was a program with

open-arms. The next day, I joined the RAPP program.

I had never been very social, and in RAPP I had to associate with people. It was scary - as if I got abducted by aliens, taken into a different world where everything seemed too good to be true - where everyone had the point of view about making a life without violence and fear. Here people actually listened. Could it be possible that these people are actually talking to me, could it be possible that this outcast has found its niche? These peers of mine were talking about secrets that I'd kept for years.

I never had an adult who actually cared for me unconditionally. During counseling I told Gale my own peers called me names like "faggot" on a daily basis. I was tired of it. Gale asked me how was I feeling about the situation and I told her I felt hurt and I didn't want to come to school anymore. She told me that I was giving those people a lot of power by letting them make me so upset. She introduced me to other students who had experienced the same thing. It was like a miracle happened. I found acceptance of myself, and people stopped harassing me because it didn't bother me anymore.

When I told my mother about RAPP, she responded with "Why do you need to see a counselor?" She was afraid of my brother and me being taken away from her. She is very religious and thinks that being gay is a sin. The irony is that according to the bible, gays would be judged and not enter the kingdom of god - but I was already judged everywhere I went, walked or visited.

The months passed and I made friends in RAPP. Being able to just say out loud that I was gay made me feel as if I won an Oscar. I was amazed to how fearless I became. I was learning about myself through the eyes of others. This was the type of world I always wanted to live in.

Through RAPP I was able to live in a nonviolent fearless world. I went from "my mother hits me because she loves me." - to "how dare you lay a hand on me." I went from drowning in my own tears in the middle of the day in school because my peers made fun of me, to "say what you want to say if it makes you feel better."

Mi familia, my RAPP family, became my brothers and sisters and my shelter from the storm. Living the life of a gay Dominican teenager was still not easy. But thanks to the RAPP program and its peer members I was able to find my self.

Please save RAPP so that other teens will have the opportunity to feel whole again.

Thank you.

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## Personal Stories of Teen RAPP Students and Alumni

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**Amber Perez**

**Bronx High School for Law and Community Service**

*Acceptance Speech for Stuckey Scholarship Award*

*Harvard Club*

*October 18, 2013*

My name is Amber Perez. I have been an active member of the Center Against Domestic Violence's Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) for seven years. I joined RAPP as a freshman at Bronx High School for Law and Community Service and in the summer of 2006, I was given the honor of being chosen as a "Peer Leader" in the RAPP Summer Peer Leadership Program.

When I first started the RAPP program, I didn't know what to expect. To my surprise, it wasn't just a "summer job" it was a group of people who became my family. I was never judged by what I said and I could talk about my problems at home with people who supported me. RAPP taught me about self-respect, and how to prevent relationship abuse and bullying. I learned why teenagers bully each other and how we could effectively stand up against the bully. Now that I am an adult, I know that RAPP forever changed my life for the better. I had such a positive experience that I was invited back for a second summer as a "Mentor" and even a third summer as a "RAPP Assistant"!!

I am thrilled and grateful to the Center Against Domestic Violence and the Stuckey family for awarding me the money for college.

My path of life has not been easy. My dad has been incarcerated most of my life and my mom raised me and my older sister alone. My mother is a recovering drug addict who has been clean for almost 20 years. She has been an inspiration to me because she showed me that no matter how bad your life is, you can always work hard and do better. She always taught me to remain open minded and to use her life as an example of what I have always tried my best in school, but at the beginning of high school me and my family were homeless for two years. Sometimes we did not know what we were going to eat for dinner. This did distract me a bit from school and once I noticed a drop in my grades I was determined not to let my situation stop me from being the student I know I could be. So with the help of extracurricular programs, tutoring and RAPP I graduated Valedictorian of my High school.

I was the first in my family to graduate high school and go to college. I enrolled in City College and started working at The Gap to pay for tuition and books. Although working part-time and going to school full-time has been a challenge, I was doing very well academically. Then, my mom and I had a disagreement about school and work. My

mom thought it would be more important to work full time and help her with bills than to go to school. So I moved out on my own so I could continue going to school. This scholarship is an incredible gift. I am majoring in clinical psychology and plan on getting my Doctorate. I am very thankful to the Center Against Domestic Violence and the Stuckey family for helping me pay for school, but most importantly for believing in me.

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**Danisha Eaddy**

[SCHOOL]  
[EVENT]  
[DATE]

My name is Danisha Eaddy and today I'll be sharing with you my unique experience as a Rapp Peer Leader. Just a little background information about myself, I'm nineteen years old, love to write poetry, and I love working with kids. Over the summer of 2012, I was granted the opportunity to become a RAPP Peer Leader with STEPS to End Family Violence and to be educated on various issues relating to teen dating violence, bullying and healthy relationships and communication. I must say that learning about the four types of communication has been beneficial to me because I have gone from communicating passively to communicating assertively. Because of these workshops, I've learned how to work with my peers, respectfully understand life from other perspectives, and how to become a good public speaker. Being able to advocate effectively as a public speaker has opened a lot of doors for me. Over the past several months, I was invited to participate in the "Love Right Conference" held at Harlem Hospital and co-facilitated a class with a RAPP Coordinator at Hunter's Graduate School of Social Work. RAPP has also taught me how to accept constructive criticism, which is a helpful tool.

Although we went on a lot of fun trips over the summer, I must say that rock climbing was the most enjoyable. I didn't realize until now that the point of that trip was to challenge us mentally and physically. When I didn't have the strength to pull myself up to the next rock, my peers encouraged me to keep trying even when I felt like giving up. Because of this challenge, I've learned to climb over obstacles and continue to strive for success no matter how difficult the situation may be.

And thanks to RAPP, that's exactly what I did; when I couldn't go away for college due to

financial burdens, I almost gave up on my goal to attend college. But RAPP supported me by allowing me to share the knowledge I gained over the summer training program and present it to high school students as part of a paid internship. RAPP helped me get back on my feet to continue accomplishing my goal of attending college. Currently I am residing in the Bronx and attending Hostos Community College, where I take the information about violence prevention and respectful relationships that I've gained from RAPP to each and every one of my classes.

RAPP has enabled me to have a positive impact on my peers. As one of them recently said to me: "you are my role model and I admire all the time and effort you have put into the program". RAPP is not like any other program, it is unique because it's a place where all of your differences are accepted without judgment. RAPP is the reason why I am where I am today and the reason that I will continue to work to help end teen violence in New York City.

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## Personal Stories of Teen RAPP Students and Alumni

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**Danielle Reece**

**Washington Irving High School**

*Testimony to the General Welfare Committee*

*New York City Council*

*March 18, 2013*

My name is Danielle Reece and I am a senior at Washington Irving High School. I wanted to speak to you today because I cannot imagine what will happen to the kids in my school if they don't have RAPP anymore.

When I first entered RAPP the only thing on my mind was that I needed someone to talk to. I had so much anger inside, and nobody knew. I was on the road to disaster. I was a good kid but I had many issues deep down inside.

When I first had a private session with my RAPP counselor, it was like a breath of fresh air. I knew that my problems wouldn't be solved overnight, but it felt good to have someone there to just listen and voice their opinions and support me no matter what. RAPP made me feel as if I had something to look forward to every day going to school.

After three years of being in RAPP, I can honestly say that I am a different person. I went from being someone who was in an abusive relationship, had major family problems and a lot of pent up anger inside, to someone who now always has a smile on my face, a positive attitude, and someone who cares about others. RAPP showed me that people can really change and that I'm not alone. There are still kids out there with similar issues like me and worse. They all need their RAPP programs.

RAPP is a second family to me. The people there are people that I can count on or just talk to when I need someone to listen. We are all different, but in the end we all joined RAPP for two reasons: We all need someone to talk to and we're all tired of feeling alone. RAPP is our home and no one wants their home to be taken away from them.

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## Personal Stories of Teen RAPP Students and Alumni

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**Andrea Cruz**

**Abraham Lincoln High School**

*Acceptance Speech for Stuckey Scholarship Award*

*Harvard Club*

*October 18, 2013*

Before I met Mr. Allison in my junior year of highschool at Lincoln I lived a pretty hectic life. I went as low as to getting with someone who broke me down verbally and emotionally. Meeting Mr. Allison was one of the best things to happen to me because he introduced me to R.A.P.P. I gained the trust I always searched for with everyone. As time went on he had asked me if I wanted to continue and be in the summer program, it was one of the best decisions of my life. During the summer RAPP program I learned so much about the rights & wrongs about respecting yourself and being respected by a partner. I knew by then i was in the wrong spot and needed to get out of it because I knew I deserved way better than what I settled for. I got to bond with everyone and got to see how people from all over the city came together to stop and learn about one thing, preventing domestic violence. I got to meet amazing people who I'm still friends with to this day that I can say if I was ever back in a low situation they would be there for me in a heart beat. I've grown to be a much more stronger, independent, confident, young lady with the help of Mr. Alison, my old co workers at the summer program, our mentors, Mrs. Rona & everyone keeping R.A.P.P. running. I gained peoples trust just like all of them have earned mine & help them get out of situations in any way I can. There are days where all my negative memories come back & I begin to feel as if I'm slipping back down. However, those days are the times I'm beyond grateful to have experienced everything I went through because it lead me here to this new day to keep moving and spreading the word on what I've learned.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ann Valdez

Address: 3178 Bayview Ave.

I represent: Self, Community Voices Heard

Address: 115 East 106<sup>th</sup> St.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jon Tague

Address: Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

Address: Brooklyn, NY (Teen RAPP)

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aliyah Acevedo

Address: Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP)

Address: Brooklyn, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sabrina Gonzalez

Address: Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP)

Address: Brooklyn, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Albery Abreu

Address: Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP)

Address: Brooklyn, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: QUENTIN WALCOIT

Address: 127 W 127TH ST

I represent: CONNECT, INC.

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3-24-11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Randy Martinez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: RAPP

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lesley Feingold

Address: New York, NY

I represent: Center Against Domestic Violence

Address: New York, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lucia Rivicchio

Address: Brooklyn, NY

I represent: STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

Address: New York, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/18/2014

Name: Joel Berg (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1 Plaza Street West, Brooklyn

I represent: NYC Coalition Against Hunger

Address: 50 Broad, NY, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

Name: TRIADA STAMPAS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: FOOD BANK FOR NYC

Address: 39 BROADWAY, 10TH FL, NYC, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

Name: ALYSSA ACIVILERA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 80-A 4TH AVE. BK NY 11217

I represent: VOCAL - NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/21/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Medina

Address: 1695 LEXINGTON AVE 3B NY, NY

I represent: COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

Address: 115 EAST 106 STREET 3<sup>FLR</sup> NY, NY 10029

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Felsenthal

Address: 120 Broadway

I represent: Met Canal

Address: 4

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alice Owen

Address: 374 Pine St, BK, NY

I represent: Colony Houses

Address: 374 Pine St, BK

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT) 3/24/14

Name: ~~Michelle~~ Linda Bunch  
Michelle Owen

Address: 574 Pine St, BK, NY

I represent: Colony Houses  
Colony Houses

Address: 374 Pine Street, BK

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Maria T. Thraenhart, Dep. Cmr

Address: 213 Beaver St

I represent: 21 Hudson St. Tenants Assoc.

Address: 21 Hudson St NYC 10013

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Erin Villari, Assist. Cmr

Address: 33 Beaver St

I represent: DHS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner

Address: 33 Beaver St.

I represent: DHS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 03/24/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RANDI HERMAN, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS + ADMINISTRATORS

Address: LOCAL 1: AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINS.

AFL-CIO

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Raye Barbieri

Address: Center for Court Innovation

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 520 8th Ave 18th floor NY 10018

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dona Anderson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Brender

Address: 704 36th St.

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

Address: 704 36th St.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Randi Levine

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Advocates for Children of New York

Address: 151 W. 30th St, New York, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeremy Hoffman

Address: 52 Broadway, NY, NY

I represent: United Federation of Teachers

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ralph Palladino

Address: 135 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President, L.1549, DC37

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner - Susan Nuccio

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner Gladys Carrion

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Luz Santiago

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Associate Executive Director, DC 1707

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mabel Everett

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Pres., Day Care Workers Local 205 / 1707 DC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Gendell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sally Greenspan 10004

Address: 1 Whitehall Street New York

I represent: Enterprise community partners

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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